MICROCOSM

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MICROCOSM

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Microcosm...

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Each year the Division of Humanities of Copiah-Lincoln Community College holds a literary competition for college and area high school students. Selected college entries compete in the Mississippi Community College Creative Writing Association competition and in the Southern Literary Festival competition.

The judges for the high school division of 1991 competition include the members of the Microcosm staff, the English faculty and Jim and Doris Bateman, Hazlehurst, MS. Raiford Crews, Crystal Springs, assisted in the selections of the college manuscripts submitted to the Mississippi Community College Creative Writing Association competition and to the Southern Literary Festival competition.

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MICROCOSM. . .

Writing in the Afternoon of My Life: A Reflection

Douglass Davis

I remember incidents that took place in my life more than fifty years ago. For all those years, there was with me a feeling that I would one day communicate expressions of my inner self through an art medium. So, at age seven, I started piano lessons and continued them through the second year of college. In high school, I took art lessons and studied voice. Those experiences enriched my life greatly, but my success was mediocre in spite of superior teachers, a great deal of effort, and the sheer perseverance that characterized my tenacious spirit.

It just never occurred to me that I could write. Printed materials seemed to come from some mystical faraway place. Books were sacred objects in my mind; they were written by the gods. I was a mere human. I could grasp other art forms because I could experience them as they were produced. Attending a musical recital or watching a painter at work brought those art forms into focus for me. I never saw a writer write, however.

This disassociation with writing was nurtured further when I transferred from Copiah-Lincoln to a senior college. There I was told that transfer students were inferior. They had not drunk from the fountain of true knowledge (until now), and had so much catching up to do that they could not possibly do anything well. That was during the fifties, and I believed what my teacher told me. Times were different then.

Graduate school professors liked my papers and encouraged me to write. By then, the sixties were upon us; that decade was acutely different. After several years of teaching, I entered government service, and it seemed that each subsequent job required me to write more. By the time I reached age thirty-five, I frequently was asked to edit and

rewrite documents prepared by others, even by my superiors. My gift for precise written expression was becoming apparent to me. I began writing papers for publication in professional journals -- and they were accepted.

Later, I returned to school to pursue a doctoral degree. There, again, my professors encouraged me to write. Some of them had my papers published. I began to feel a kinship with writing. Each writing inspiration (or assignment) seemed to be a piece of rough stone or wood from which I could fashion something that satisfied my need for expression and pleased others. Aside from the statistics, the writing of my dissertation was a breeze. I became so engrossed that I wrote night and day for nearly eighteen months. It was my passion. The professors made no changes in my writing; my major professor introduced me at his retirement part as one of only four doctoral students whose paper he did not have to rewrite during his thirty years of advising graduate students.

Writing is the medium in which I find a great deal of satisfaction and happiness; often, it is intoxicating. I respect my word processor. It is the instrument of my art. Writing takes a lot of practice. This practice is best based upon an understanding of our language. Those years of diagramming compound-complex sentences, conjugating verbs, and practicing punctuation and economy of words through the selection of precise words and phrases were all so necessary. A comparison could state that they are the same for me as practice of scales and phrasing are to a musician who must study and sight-read and practice until he or she knows exactly what must be done simultaneously with the hands, the body, the eyes, and the mind.

This writing flower continues to bloom into the afternoon of my life. I plan to nurture it into retirement during which time I shall write and write and write --perhaps a collection of stories about my childhood and youth in the South. The literary South, you know, has risen again.

Lock and Load, Rock and Roll

Allen Cooper

Cast Of Characters

ALEX - A Vietnam war veteran. Dresses in jungle fatigues. He is extremely nervous. He is one-hundred percent mentally disabled.

CLOVIS - Is a black woman in her early sixties. She and her sister OVIS are old maids and have always lived together.

OVIS - Is a little older than CLOVIS.

MARCELLUS WILSON - A drug dealer. He is a black man in his late twenties. He is very big and wears a lot of gold.

DOMINOE WILSON - Dominoe is MARCELLUS' brother. He is in his early twenties. He is very thin and looks more like a heavy drug user than a dealer.

BEN MILLER - ALEX'S dog

ACT I

SCENE I

In a country setting outside of Jackson, Mississippi. It is January, 1992. The stage is split into two separate efficiency apartments. This is a duplex house. Right stage is a messy room with the bed and couch turned upside down. The refrigerator door is off the refrigerator. The walls and the ceiling are riddled with bullet holes. A tattered American Flag hangs above a faded North Vietnamese Army flag. Darts pierce the yellow star in the center of the red NVA Flag. All kinds of Vietnam paraphernalia hangs on the walls. A life-size poster of the Rolling Stones hangs on the rear wall. MIA/POW banners cover the side walls.

The other apartment is neat and clean. Both apartments are

dimly lit as the curtain opens. Very loud music plays from the right stage apartment ("We Got To Get Out Of This Place" by The ANIMALS). ALEX sits in a chair holding a sawed-off shotgun.

(ALEX can improvise in his apartment while CLOVIS and OVIS continue the action in their apartment.)

(CLOVIS and OVIS enter their apartment carrying bouquets of wild-flowers. They turn on the lights and yell at each other over the loud music.)

CLOVIS: No, sir. You sho' cain't trust the federal government. T Men, G Men, FBI Men, crazy men (points to the next apartment) cain't trust any of 'em. Why ain't they got any T Women?

OVIS: Yaahaaaaa. They is T Women. Don't you know! They the ones that take up the cake and tea cups at bridal showers, Yaaaahaaa.

CLOVIS: We both crazy as he is (points to ALEX'S apartment) Ever since we come under the Federal Government Witness Protection Relocation Program we been crazy.

OVIS: No, we was crazy before that. We got crazy when we told what we knew 'bout Marcellus Wilson and his brother Dominoe Wilson and the crack business they had going. How'd we know they was linked to the biggest Colombian Cartel in the world?

CLOVIS: Amen to that. Now old Marcellus and Dominoe are roamn' the streets dealing more drugs than ever and trying to find and kill us. Here we are locked up in this apartment with strange furniture, strange clothes and a strange weirdo next door.

(Music stops)

(ALEX is straightening up his apartment)

CLOVIS: Wish he'd put that po' fool out of his misery. Po things eat up with Agent Orange. He dumb too. G Men told him that agent orange wouldn't hurt him. He crazy as a loon. Craziest white man alive. Crazy as a bat from fightin' in the rivers of Vietnam. Didn't know anybody could be so crazy and live.

OVIS: We could complain to the G Men, the FBI. Tell 'em we tired of livin' next to a grunt that shoots at imaginary gooks.

CLOVIS: We living next door to him cause of our complaining about Marcellus and Dominoe. Ain't gone rat on nobody else ever again. No matter what. No, not me. Not even if I sees the biggest drug cartel drive up to my front door and ask directions to church. No, I ain't.

OVIS: Alex ain't so bad, sometime.

CLOVIS: It's the other time I'm worried 'bout.

(ALEX begins cleaning his guns)

(Knock at CLOVIS and OVIS' door)

CLOVIS: Get it.

OVIS: Why me?

CLOVIS: You closest.

OVIS: You is.

CLOVIS: You is most certainly.

OVIS: I'm at least three steps further away than you is.

CLOVIS: Is not.

OVIS: Is.

CLOVIS: Is not. (Mad. Goes to door, opens it and no one is there)

OVIS: Who is it?

CLOVIS: (comes back with small package) If you wanted to know you should've gone to the door yourself.

OVIS: You making me crazy. You been my crazy sister for over 60 years.

CLOVIS: You already crazy. You the crazy one that phoned the FBI. You the one that got us relocated. Cain't beat that for crazy. I was perfectly happy where I was. I'd of gotten my 20 year church attendance pin come tomorrow. Perfect attendance for 20 years.

OVIS: You the one, You the one that preached 'bout gettin' the drug dealers off the street and right'n wrongs. You the fat crazy canary singing, "Do somethin'. So I did. I called the FBI, the G Men. So what's in the box? A bomb?

(National Anthem comes on T.V. in Alex's apartment. He stands at attention. He turns it up louder)

CLOVIS: Let's see. Oh, it's our new identification. Look, we get driver's license.

OVIS: We cain't drive. And we ain't got a car.

CLOVIS: This says we can. And they done give me a white lady's name. Listen, Dianne Armstrong.

OVIS: Lord, we gone stick out to old Marcellus like two vanilla creams in a chocolate box. White folks ain't got a bit of sense. I wanted a Afro name like Tamamka Kambawa.

CLOVIS: Me too. Look here. They give us free passes to Disney World. Ain't that nice. (reads note) They say we are in danger at this time if we stay here.

OVIS: Now, how we gone get to Disney World?

CLOVIS: Says here we're to rent a car. Says have a good time in Disney World. We have seven days all expenses paid. They say they'll have a new house ready when we return. They'll contact us as soon as we get back from Disney World. We'll be notified by phone as to our new address.

OVIS: We gots to come back here. They said it's dangerous here. Why we got to come back. I'll never understand the government.

CLOVIS: Seven days free in Disney World. I always wanted to go to Disney World.

OVIS: I wants to go.

(ALEX leaves his apartment with a goldfish bowl and his dog, BEN MILLER)

(ALEX knocks on their door)

OVIS and CLOVIS: I'll get it. (They both rush to the door)

CLOVIS: Alex, come on in. What you got?

ALEX: It's the General. He's real sick.

OVIS: You been feeding the General. You got to feed him.

CLOVIS: You been changing his water? That's important for a gold-fish.

ALEX: All of the above. He's shaking bad as me.

OVIS: He hates cigarette smoke.

CLOVIS: How can you tell?

OVIS: All goldfish hate cigarette smoke. Ain't you ever been in a pet

shop before. They always got signs over the fish tanks. They say, "We mind very much if you smoke."

ALEX: Yea, I remember them signs. Poor thing. I'll go outside to smoke from now on. By the way I got my truck fixed. I can give you a lift if you need to go anywhere. I got my disability check today so I wanted to pay you back for the $20.00 I borrowed from you last week.

(CLOVIS and OVIS look at each other)

CLOVIS: We do need to go somewhere.

ALEX: Where? Let's rock and roll. Me and Ben are ready.

OVIS: Well, we got passes and money for seven days at Disney World. Will your truck make it?

CLOVIS: Or, we could rent a car.

ALEX: No, won't rent no car. I might wreck it and that would be too much pressure. Got to stay away from pressure. Man, Disney World. I ain't got no tail lights or muffler, but the engine is good. I can pack in a couple cases of oil so we won't have to stop so much.

OVIS: Ain't nothin' wrong with this fish 'ceptin he's lonely.

ALEX: Lonely?

OVIS: Yep. Love sick. Get him a friend girl and he'll be swimmin' straight again in no time.

ALEX: You hear that General? We got to get you a friend girl. When do we leave for Disney World?

CLOVIS: Five minutes. The note says we suppose to be gone by 12:00 o'clock noon January 10, 1992. It's 10 minutes til 12 right now.

OVIS: Reckon Marcellus is on his way right now? Why we gots to go so fast?

CLOVIS: Notes says we in danger if'n we stays here. I'm gone.

ALEX: In Nam we always played the hurry up and wait game. At least while we're waiting we can go to Disney World.

CLOVIS: Let's Rock and Load.

OVIS: That's Rock and Roll. That means go. Lock and Load is what you do with the gun. Ain't that right, Alex?

ALEX: You got it.

CLOVIS: We ready. We ain't got but what we got on. Ain't got time to pack.
OVIS: Ain't got nothin' to pack.

(ALEX carries the General with him to his apartment and gathers his guns and leaves with the General and Ben.)

CLOVIS: You think we'll be O.K. with Alex?
OVIS: Well, we could stay here and take our chances with Marcellus and Dominoe.
CLOVIS: I reckon Alex ain't is crazy as them two. I just hope Alex don't mistake Mickey Mouse for a gook.
OVIS: Me too.
CLOVIS: Let's Load and Lock.
OVIS: Rock and Roll and Lock and Load. Say it right.

(They leave and the lights go out)

SCENE II

(Nine days later)

(Singing is heard in the distance. All three are singing, "Who's the leader of the band, Mickey Mouse and M. I. C. K. E. Y. M. O. U. S. E. They are all dressed in Mickey Mouse and Florida clothes.)

(Outside downstage in the audience two black men look up into CLOVIS and OVIS' window.)

MARCELLUS: There they are. I told you they'd be back. Ol' Marcellus knows. Stupid Relocation program cain't trip the mighty Marcellus.
DOMINOE: You were right. Now let's get rid of them and get out of here.
MARCELLUS: That guy. Get rid of him first. The old ladies won't be nothing. You think that guy is a DEA agent?

DOMINOE: Looks like one. Gots to be one. Kill him.

MARCELLUS: Yea. O.K. No problem.

(They pull out .45 caliber guns, check them and disappear into the bushes)

(Lights are dim in both apartments as the scene begins. They all enter CLOVIS and OVIS' apartment wearing Mickey Mouse ears. Even Ben Miller the dog and the goldfish bowl have Mickey Mouse ears on. They slump into the chairs.)

CLOVIS: How many traffic tickets did we get in all?
OVIS: Alex 3. Clovis 2. Ovis 6.
ALEX: That's not bad seeing as how you don't know how to drive.
CLOVIS: I swear I saw the bushes move out there. Look, they ain't no wind.
OVIS: Yea, me too. Look yonder. Them two runnin' around to the back.
ALEX: Where?
CLOVIS: There. They behind them bushes. There they are.
OVIS: Lord, God. It's Marcellus and that Dominoe brother of his. They done found us. So much for government protection. So much for relocation.
CLOVIS: Them twos come to do some relocatin' of our heads from our bodies.
ALEX: Damn, I'll back. (turns to leave then turns back) Those the guys you turned in, right?
CLOVIS: Yea, thems the one.
OVIS: Yea, the ones you ain't suppose to know nothin' about.
CLOVIS: You ain't suppose to know he's the biggest crack dealer between here and Bogata, Colombia.
OVIS: And Marcellus or Dominoe ain't either one no Juan Valdez.
ALEX: Damn. This calls for reinforcements.
CLOVIS: Be careful. They mean.
ALEX: Yea, but I'm crazy. The government says I'm $1,200 a month crazy. Turn all the furniture upside down and make a circle like a wagon train protecting itself from Indians.

CLOVIS: Now he think he's John Wayne.

OVIS: That boy ought to get five Gs a month.
CLOVIS: (yells out behind Alex) Marcellus looks just like Mr. T., but Marcellus wears more gold.

(Alex leaves and enters his apartment and collects guns, grenades, sacks of ammo belts. He grabs his flak jacket and helmet)

OVIS: Just tell him Marcellus looks like Fort Knox.
CLOVIS: Dominoe is wormy looking. Turn the furniture over like he said.

(They turn furniture upside down and put it in a circle)

OVIS: You think we ought to call the police?
CLOVIS: (Looks at OVIS with a-you-got-to-be-crazy-look) Sure you do that, Ovis. Excuse me. I mean Donna. Ain't that the white lady name they give you? Donna Jones. You think the police is going to believe a black woman with a white lady's name wearing Mickey Mouse ears, holding two lovesick goldfish--wearing Mickey Mouse ears, all of which are hiding behind a dog wearing Mickey Mouse ears? And now there's your driving record across three states, 2 speeding tickets, 2 failures to stop at red lights, 1 failure to yield to an Am Track who ripped the bumper and tailgate off of Alex's truck and almost frightened po' Ben Miller to death. And 1 ticket for sassin' a police officer when the officer asked if you'd been drinkin'. You can thank Ben Miller for baring his teeth and growling for 10 minutes at that Barney Fife looking officer, who was so scared of dogs you could tell he had had a traumatic experience as a child with some mad dog.
OVIS: I was just asking.
CLOVIS: Get in the circle like a good settler and don't asks nothin'. (The dog is in the circle also)
OVIS: Damn. All I smells is dog's bad breath.
CLOVIS: It's all them onions and peppers you fed him off your hamburgers.
OVIS: Dog eats anything. Ben Miller, you sho' did have a good time didn't you? You was a waggin' yo tail every time you saw them two yellow arches.

CLOVIS: Shut up talking to that dog. Here we fixin' to be murdered and you talking foolishness to a damn dog.

(ALEX enters by a side window of OVIS and CLOVIS' apartment)

OVIS: Here they come through the window.
CLOVIS: Don't worry Marcellus couldn't get through that window.
OVIS: But, wormy Dominoe could.
CLOVIS: It's Alex.
OVIS: Thank you, Jesus.
ALEX: SSSHHHHHHHHH! They're coming up to the back door. Stay down. (ALEX sees the goldfish bowl on the counter. He gets it and dives into the circle of furniture.)
CLOVIS: I hear them on the steps.
OVIS: They here. We should of called the police.
ALEX: I smell gooks.
OVIS: That ain't gooks you smell. It's dog's breath. We ain't in Vietnam. You worse than my nephew, Marvin. Marvin saw gooks in the toilet, gooks in the closet, gooks in his cornflakes.
CLOVIS: Believe me, Marcellus ain't no gook. Marcellus is big and he's ugly and smells like Mr. Ralph Lauren Polo hisself.
ALEX: Come on mothers, I'll blow you away.
OVIS: We gots to get out of this place.
CLOVIS: If it's the last thing we ever do. Probably be the last thing we do.

(ALEX rises and fires the machine gun. Marcellus and Dominoe get back and go to downstage, outside of front window)

MARCELLUS: (from offstage you hear MARCELLUS ask) Who the hell was that guy?
OVIS: He's the next best thing to Dirty Harry, fool.
CLOVIS: Yea, and he gone skin you alive. Come on and make his day.

(MARCELLUS and DOMINOE are now visible to the audience)

DOMINOE: Damn, who is he?

MARCELLUS: He's got to be DEA. That was a M-16 he was shootin' at us with. I swear it.
DOMINOE: Let's take them from the window.

(They move up toward the window.)

ALEX: (turns toward window) Here. Take these. Point them at the window. They'll attack from the front. That's how their gooky minds work.
CLOVIS: What's this?
ALEX: M-16.
OVIS: And this?
ALEX: That's my favorite sawed-off shotgun.
CLOVIS: What do we do?
ALEX: Point them at the window and pull the trigger.

(ALEX picks up grenade launcher)

(MARCELLUS and DOMINOE move up to the window and peep inside. CLOVIS lets loose with a round from the M-16. You hear glass break.)

CLOVIS: I think I saw them.
DOMINOE: Damn, Marcellus. We better call Mr. Cario in Bogata. This ain't gone be as easy as we thought.
MARCELLUS: Hell, we ain't gone call the main man. You know what happened the last time we called him.
DOMINOE: Oh, yea.
MARCELLUS: He told us that if we couldn't handle our own little problems he'd fix it so that we couldn't handle no problems at all.
DOMINOE: OH, Yea.
MARCELLUS: Take the left side of the window. I'll take the right side. Take no captives. Comprehendo, Amigo?
DOMINOE: Wee Wee, Senoir.
MARCELLUS: That guy must be DEA. DEA, man them guys is crazy.

(ALEX, CLOVIS and OVIS are standing up pointing at the window.)

DOMINOE: ONE-TWO-THREE.
MARCELLUS: Wait a minute. That guy's got a machine gun. I don't like rat a tat a tat a tat sounds. Makes me nervous.
DOMINOE: The main man makes me nervous using words like, expendable, and worthless and what's that word he used the last time we screwed up?
MARCELLUS: He said we were inconsequential to the cause.
DOMINOE: Did he say that? What's that mean?
MARCELLUS: It means if we don't get rid of these clowns, we're going to meet a violent death at the hands of Mr. Cario, the cartel. We'll be two haints with no place to go.
DOMINOE: It tooks us two tries to kill those last two kids that were selling dope for us.
MARCELLUS: Sure did. They wouldn't stand still.
DOMINOE: I really didn't want to kill that old lady and priest.
MARCELLUS: They should of stayed in the church and not got so damn nosey.
DOMINOE: Them two old ladies in there is going to testify at our trial and ruin us.
MARCELLUS: No, they ain't. (They begin to move close to window.)
ALEX: Lock and Load. Rock and Roll, ladies.
OVIS: Come on, mothers, we ready.

(MARCELLUS and DOMINOE rush the window)

ALEX: FIRE!

(ad lib of yelling, screaming and firing of guns and grenade launcher.)

ALEX: Cease fire. Cease fire! Stop shooting.
(He goes to the window and makes a bad face as he sees the bodies, which are out of the audience's view) They're dead.
CLOVIS: You sure?

(CLOVIS and OVIS drop their guns and go over to where ALEX is standing)

OVIS: I'd say he was sure. Looks like maybe the old grenade launcher

found its target.

CLOVIS: I think I may of hit ol' Dominoe.

ALEX: What a mess.

CLOVIS: They probably need the leaf-sucking machine to clean that mess up.

(Phone rings. They all hunt for it)

CLOVIS: Hello? Yea, well all right. 2181 Fall Drive. O.K. Thank you, Mr. G. Man. Thank you for our new house. And thank you for all the wonderful protection your Witness Protection Reloca tion Identification done give us. We hope we have repaid you in some small way. OH, by the way, Mr. G Man. Now that we are going to our new house you gone set us up instead of this here dump, you might want to send over the road crew with the leaf-sucking machine to clean up a little mess here. BYE.

CLOVIS: Let's go.

OVIS: Where?

CLOVIS: They finally got us a whole house. The man says it's got three bedrooms and five bathrooms and a two-car garage. Let's go.

ALEX: They'll take the house back when they find out what we did to Marcellus and Dominoe. They'll say you don't need no more protection. They'll probably even charge us with murder.

CLOVIS and OVIS: MURDER? MURDER?

CLOVIS: Oh, no they won't. Cause we'll take them with us.

OVIS: Yea, we'll scrape 'em up and take ol' Marcellus and Dominoe with us. We deserve that house and car. We worked hard for 'em.

ALEX: What about me and Ben Miller.

OVIS: You comin' with us. You part of the family now.

ALEX: Yea, like in the GODFATHER movie. The family that kills together stays together.

CLOVIS: You got it, killer.

OVIS: Come on it's dark. We'll throw 'em in yo truck. We can bury 'em in the backyard at our new house. Plant eggplants over them two and that will be it.

CLOVIS: Let's go. There's more Marcelluses and Dominoes in this world to take their places. Ain't nobody gone miss them two. Not even their mothers.

ALEX: I got to get a few things from my place.

OVIS: We'll help. We ain't got nothin' here 'ceptin our purses and souvenirs from Disney World. (She grabs the goldfish bowl) Come on you two newly weds. We going to our new home. You probably can have your own bath tub. Don't think I ever even seen a house with five bathrooms.

(ALEX enters his apartment and takes down flags. The T.V. is still on. The National Anthem begins to play. They all come to attention. They stretch out the tattered American Flag and salute. (When the music ends ALEX takes down the Rolling Stone poster)

OVIS: Let's get that Marcellus and Dominoe off the fertile American soil and get the hell out of here.

ALEX: (singing) "I Gotta Get Out Of This Place, If It's The Last Thing I Ever Do."

CLOVIS: get a bunch of Glad Hefty Heavy Duty Garbage bags. We ain't got no leaf-sucking machine. I sho' am glad we two miles from the nearest neighbors. Somebody might of seen something.

OVIS: Didn't nobody see nothin' but us. And we family. We free at last. Free at last.

OVIS and CLOVIS: Thank God Almighty we free at last.

CLOVIS: Let's Rock and Load.

(ALEX is still singing the same song)

OVIS: Rock and Roll. It's not Rock and Load. Get it straight. Rock and Roll and Lock and Load.

(CLOVIS and OVIS continue to fuss as they all leave and the apartment lights are turned out by OVIS)

THE END

Southern Literary Festival Award
MCCCWA Award

If The Shoe Fits

Keshelia Calcote

Cranfield used to be considered the strangest town east of Corn Cob Creek. All the folks there were hillbilly idiots who blamed anything unpleasant, uncommon, unreasonable, or ungodly on supernatural forces. All the townspeople carried lucky pennies, kept four-leafed clovers in their Bibles, and nailed horse shoes over their doorways. Some of the older, more eccentric folks carried an entire rabbit instead of the poor creature's more traditional one foot.

Those Cranfield loons acted the same way every day, all day and this particular day was no different.

Now let us digress a little here. Don't go thinking that I was a superstitious fool just like the rest of my fellow townspeople. Even though I've never walked under a ladder in my entire life, I guess you could say that I was just about the sanest person who ever lived in old Cranfield, which is exactly why I took up the responsibility of writing this tale for you. Now let us go back to our story.

It just happened to be raining cats, dogs, and an occasional cow or two that Sunday afternoon when Arnold, Mayor Simmons' youngest boy, went to ring the bell in the town square signifying that the regular church service was about to begin. It had not rained on a Sunday in Cranfield in over seventy-five years; obviously, the townspeople were all jittery. The large, black crow that had perched high upon the church steeple earlier that morning made everyone even more uneasy. Crows had not been one of the more likeable creatures in Cranfield since an entire army of those nasty, squawking critters had virtually destroyed forty acres of Grandma Crawley's sweet, juicy corn and nearly carried off the statue of General Harold Cran, who had founded our rickety little town about a hundred years ago. It had been raining really hard the day the crows came to town, too, seventy-five years ago.

Probably the only people who weren't baffled by the unusual situation were me, of course, and Jud, our town drunk, who was usually sprawled out on the church steps. His ragged, old clothes were splattered with mud, and he smelled strongly of corn whiskey and snuff. He had large, deep-set eyes that had turned blue-grey with age. His long, pointed nose was wrinkled as he squinted at the passers-by through the thick sheets of rain that poured from the bulky, dark clouds above.

Evidently, Jud had a very unique appearance. However, it was not too authentic, since there was another one in town almost exactly like his. And that one belonged to Reverend Reuben, our town's minister.

Now the most uncanny thing about Reverend Reuben and Jud was that they had so many things in common. And it obviously worried the townspeople that their beloved minister, who hardly ever did any ministering at all, and the town drunk were almost like identical twins. Most of them felt that an evil spirit had cast this so called "curse" on them for sins they'd committed in a past life.

Nevertheless, Jud and Reverend Reuben were like two flies on a mangy dog. They both wore old, black boots that always seemed to be covered with thick, dark mud. They wore tattered, dusty over-coats, even during the dead of summer. And the almost, always unbearable stench that rose from underneath the reverend's overcoat was exactly that of Jud's, corn whiskey and snuff. They each carried a polished, silver snuff box in a starched, white handkerchief. It was even rumored that Reverend Reuben kept a pewter whiskey flask, just like Jud's, underneath the dusty, smelly folds of his overcoat. Another peculiar thing about the weird twosome was that neither one of them had ever had a last name; they'd always been known simply as Reverend Reuben and Jud.

The strangest thing about them was that they were never seen out on the same day. Ms. Susie Mae Dawson, our oldest and nosiest living resident, said that it had been that way for as long as she could remember.

Reverend Reuben was never seen on weekdays, but Jud was always in his usual spot on the church steps. On Saturdays, Jud went into hiding, I guess, and Reverend Reuben would be about town, making his rounds, running errands, and visiting the sick and shut-ins. He waved at the townspeople as he trotted along on Elmer, his shaggy, brown horse that was about ready to take a one-way trip to the glue factory. Then on Sunday morning, Jud was sprawled out on the church steps again, offending anyone nearby with his dreadful odor, and Reverend Reuben was no where to be found. But after all the people were inside the church and seated, ready for the sermon, Reverend Reuben would appear from behind the thick, black curtain that hung neatly on its rod near the choir stand. No one knew exactly what was

behind the curtain, but there were some wild stories about the idea. Some of the older members of the church believed that the reverend was actually God himself and that he lived behind that curtain inside the church to protect himself from the temptations of the world. A few of the more level-headed folks thought that Reverend Reuben just slept in the church behind the curtain at night because he didn't have anywhere else to sleep.

Nevertheless, Reverend Reuben was always waiting behind the curtain until everyone was inside the church and the doors were closed and locked, to keep out evil spirits, of course. Then he would sluggishly drag his long, paper-thin figure up to the pulpit. And nobody knew where Jud went during Sunday service because there were no windows to look out of and see if he was still on the steps, and no one could ever remember seeing him stagger into the church and seat his thin little frame in one of the pews. So this particular Sunday was no different, other than the rain and the crow that I have already mentioned.

After everyone had gotten inside the church and was in his assigned seat [we had designated seats because the elders of the congregation believed that we would be exposed to other people's sins if we sat anywhere we wanted to], Mr. Cucumber, one of the deacons, shut the door behind us and bolted it tight. That was the reverend's cue to emerge from behind the curtain, and he was right on time, as usual. He stumbled up to the pulpit, and as he cleared his throat to begin his traditional two-hour sermon, I had an odd feeling that something extraordinary and unforgettable was going to happen to me, but I quickly dismissed the thought and leaned back to listen to Reverend Reuben's sermon on Moses parting the Red Sea.

After the sermon was over and Molly and Dolly Tucker, the ushers, had awakened the occupants of the first pew, the reverend quickly ducked behind the curtain. Then Mr. Cucumber unlocked the doors and started ushering everyone out of the church. Just as I reached the last pew, I thought about the important message my mamma had told me to deliver to Reverend Reuben. She had decided to stay home that Sunday because she thought something tragic was going to happen because of the rain and the crow. I knew that I couldn't just go marching right up and pull the curtain back because no one, other than the reverend, was allowed behind it. But I had to give him the message because my mamma probably would've skinned me alive if I hadn't. So

I decided to wait until everyone, including Mr. Cucumber and the Tucker twins, was gone.

After I made sure that I was the only one left, I tiptoed slowly up to the pulpit and pulled back the heavy curtain. Much to my surprise, I found that the little room behind the curtain was furnished with nothing more than a desk lamp, a three-legged chair with no back, and a rickety little table. Even more surprising was that there was no Reverend Reuben anywhere, only his old muddy, black boots that I had never seen him without.

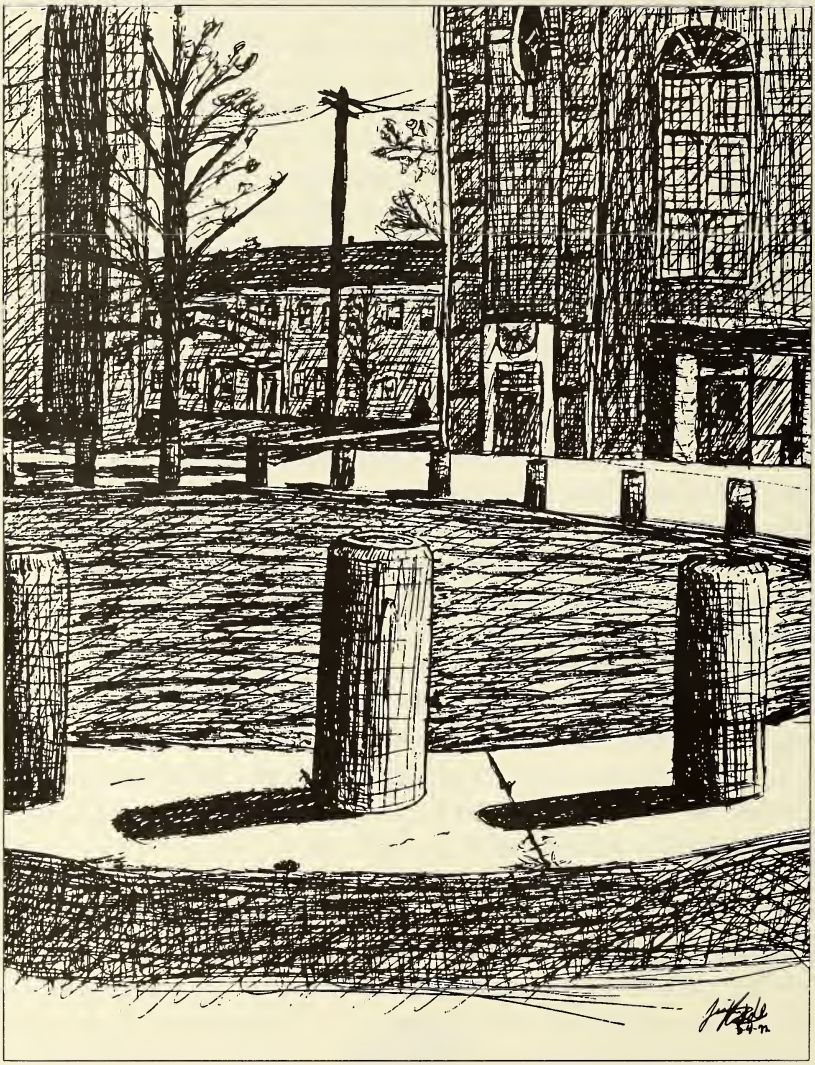
Puzzled by what I saw, I turned and headed for the door. As I pulled the heavy, oak door open, I was greeted by beams of warm sunlight. While I blinked a little against the sun's brightness, I could distinctly hear someone talking.

"You came right on time, but I don't think they've figured it out yet," said the voice. "But until they do figure it out, it'll be our little secret."

As I listened intently, I realized that the voice was a very familiar one; it was Jud's. And he was sitting on the bottom step with his legs crossed. As I carefully descended the steps, I noticed a huge black object on his left shoulder. He turned around to face me and as our eyes met, a menacing chill came over me. Jud had been talking to the enormous, black crow that had been sitting on the church bell earlier that morning and was now perched arrogantly on Jud's shoulder.

I continued down the steps and started walking slowly down the road toward my house near Silver Creek Hill. When I reached the corner I turned around to see if Jud was gone. But there he was, still sitting there with that same sneaky grin on his face, that evil spark in his eyes, the old crow on his shoulder, but there were no mud-splattered boots on his dusty little feet.

MCCCWA Award



The Game Not Played

Brad Morgan

I stepped in the house
not to hear his laughter
echo down the halls
not for his pipe-smoke
to drift to my nose
not to hear his stories
of the grand ole days.

I walked through the house
meeting old friends and relations,
people I hadn't seen in years,
even a few strangers were crying.

It seemed unreal that with these many people,
he wouldn't be sitting right in the middle
telling jokes and entertaining us all.

I stopped by his chair
looking beside it
I saw his checkerboard
all set to play.

I remembered the days,
the games that we played,
he the champion
and I the ever ready contender.
The times we shared
were perfect there
now the board is set
for the game not played.

Anniversaries Often Coming Our Way (Ps. 118:24)*

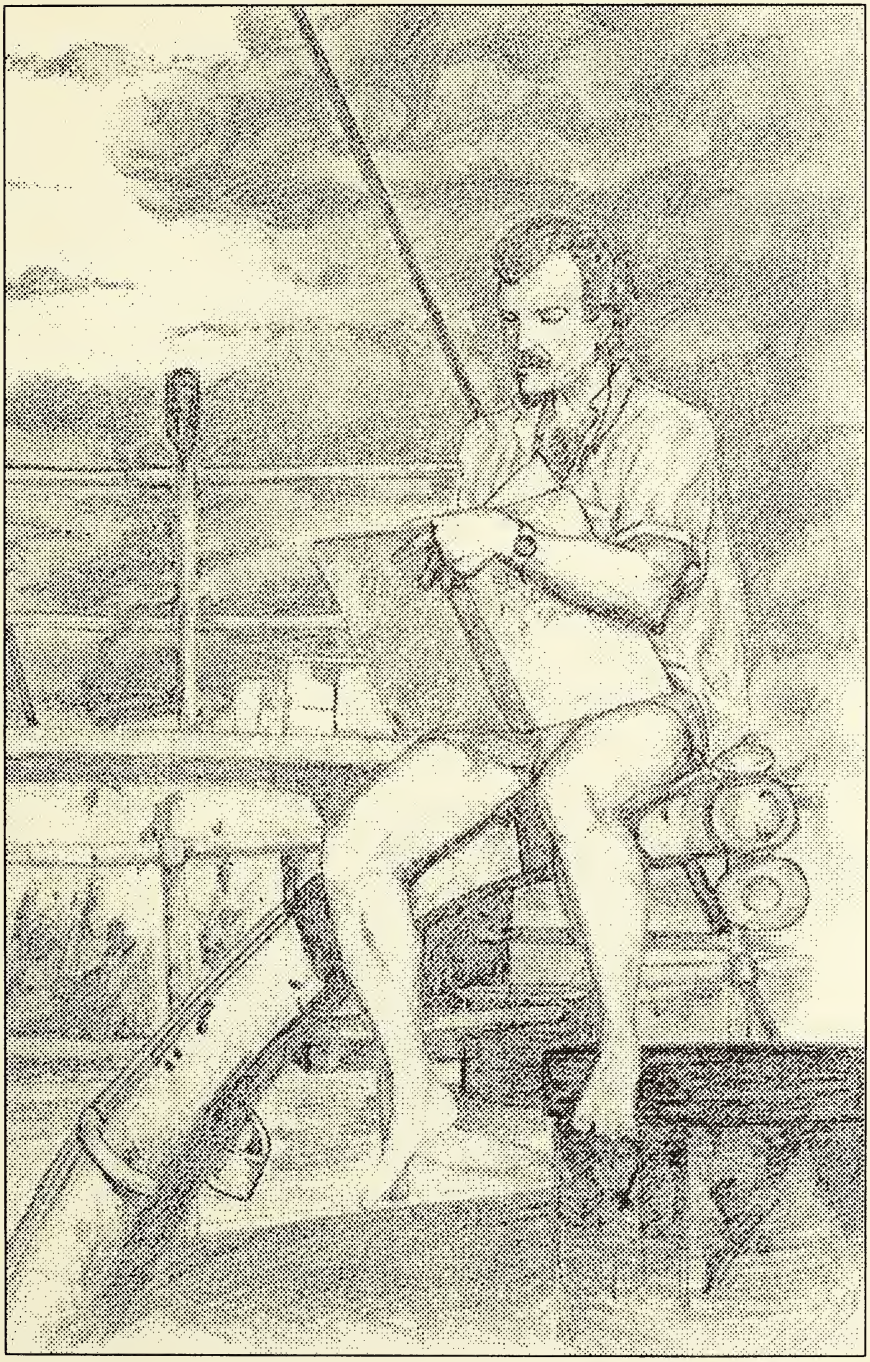
Jim Bateman

Only millennia serve some desires;
centennia satisfy other fires;
tonight we choose a solid base of ten
to mark a point at which, again,
we, as good friends could stop a time to say,
"Let's celebrate another one's coming our way."

Perhaps, in still more time, one year will do
(as was the case before) to lead us through
a celebration. Even more: a day
may suffice wherein we all may well obey
Psalmists' urge to singing, "This day we know
is Godly made. It's good, God made it so."

Sometimes there's gold in but another breath,
when one, in earthly strain, breathes face-to-face
with death.

* "This is the day the Lord has made. We will rejoice and be glad in it." *The Living Bible*. Paraphrased.



Robert V. Turnage

The Grandmother's Effect on "A Good Man is Hard To Find"

Miles Preston Davis

In Flannery O'Connor's story "A Good Man is Hard to Find," it becomes quite clear immediately that the grandmother is the primary base for this story. More to the fact, she is the story. It is her obvious selfishness in the beginning that sets the tone for the duration of the story. Her manipulation of the children is the turning point in the story as the youngsters beg their parents to turn down the road that would eventually lead to their death. And, it would be her own selfish tongue that would bring about this awful demise. Obviously, O'Connor uses the grandmother's selfish nature as a means of expressing the story's plot, climax, and conclusion.

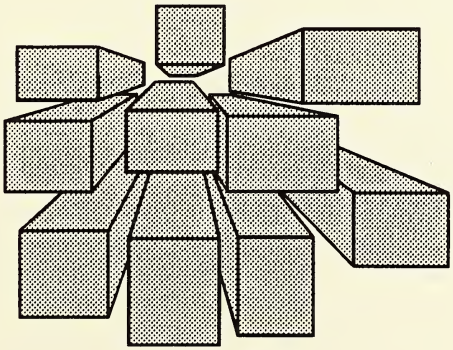
The plot, to me, would not have existed if it were not for the self-centered old woman. Hers is a very strong character who obviously has a great deal of influence on the ones around her. In all likelihood, this is probably because of her elderly nature and her ability to take advantage of generosity. This is the primary reason the family takes the out of the way road to find the old plantation the grandmother had earlier planted the colorful seeds in the minds of the naive young children. Their incessant begging is the purpose for heading in the wrong direction and, ultimately, running into the ditch and dying at the hands of an unmerciful killer.

As the Misfit appears, so does the climax of the story begin to unfold yet, not fully, until the grandmother first sees the man and exclaims, "You're the Misfit! I recognized you at once!" This was the beginning of the climax in a sense that it set the tone for the inevitable conclusion of the family's death. I suppose, one might say that the family's demise as a whole would be the "body" of the conclusion and that all prior events leading up to this point were in direct correlation with the statements and actions of the grandmother. This, indeed, would place the bulk, if not the full measure of blame, in the hands of the grandmother.

As the grandmother pleads with the Misfit for her own pardon, the selfishness of the old woman becomes apparent to him. I feel that he may have been turned off to her incessant begging because of this.

He seems to listen halfheartedly, almost grudgingly to the mindless babble. However, one could sense, that, in a strange way, he may have been touched slightly by some of her statements perhaps those of a religious nature. Yet, as the old woman begins to notice this slight shadow of sincere human emotion, she is not mindful of the man's own vulnerability. So, in an effort to save her own life and perhaps touch that of another, the grandmother reaches out boldly, touches the Misfit's shoulder, and murmurs, "Why, you're one of my babies. You're one of my own children!" Startled, the Misfit throws up the nose of his gun and shoots her three times. "She would of been a good woman,"the Misfit says,"if it had been somebody there to shoot her every minute of her life." This statement, for the most part, concludes the story.

If there is any doubt as to whether the grandmother is the central figure throughout this story, one may ponder the idea for himself. It is now the reader's turn to explore the evidence and come to his or her own conclusions.



Foreshadowing in "A Good Man Is Hard To Find"

June Coghlan

In her short story "A Good Man Is Hard To Find," Flannery O'Connor uses imagery and foreshadowing to create suspense. These elements keep the reader interested until the end, offering glimpses of what is to come.

In the opening paragraph itself, the family's fate is foreshadowed when the grandmother warns her son Bailey that The Misfit has escaped from prison and is headed in the same direction that the family is taking. This is almost a guarantee that we will meet The Misfit later in the story.

The grandmother, in preparation for a trip she does not want to take, dresses herself elaborately in a navy dress, pinning a spray of violets to her lapel. In her hat and white gloves, she seems dressed for a funeral. O'Connor writes that "in case of an accident, anyone seeing the grandmother dead by the highway would know at once that she was a lady." This foreshadows the accident to come.

When the family at last embarks upon their trip, the trees were "full of silver white sunlight, and the meanest of them sparkled." This phrase lends a rather sinister air to the forest, while the reference to the sunlight seems heavenly. O'Connor again uses the image when the family stops for lunch at a roadside cafe, and the children run out into the white sunlight. It is at this cafe, Red Sammy's Barbeque, that the strongest foreshadowing occurs. Red Sammy's signs proclaim : RED SAMMY'S YOUR MAN! From reading the signs one could gather that Sammy is a good man, but during lunch he pointedly says:"A good man is hard to find." The grandmother does insist that he is a good man, however. Again The Misfit is discussed . Sammy's wife worries that he may attack the cafe, but Sammy is quick to silence her. He doesn't want to worry his customers.

The accident itself occurs just outside of the town of Toomsboro, a name that is so appropriate it seems ironic. After the accident, the grandmother flags down "a big black battered hearselike automobile." It is a hearse of sorts. The driver, who turns out to be The Misfit , is wearing a black hat of all things, the consummate bad guy attire. The trees come into play again, gaping at them "like a dark open mouth."

It is in the forest that the family is killed. While the reader has suspected this all along, it does come as a surprise because The Misfit seemed almost willing to let them go. O'Connor keeps the reader going until the end with her sharply written dialogue and imagery.

How Patriotic Is Uncle Sam?

Allen Cooper

I opened the shoe-sized cardboard box shipped U.P.S. The return address was Miami, Florida. Carefully wrapped in newspaper and plastic was a Distinguished Service Cross, an Air Force Cross, a Silver Star, a Bronze Star, a Purple Heart and a Distinguished Flying cross with a silver oak leaf cluster representing six Distinguished Flying Crosses. There were many more medals that proceeded this shipment from my grandfather's commander.

As the search goes on for more information on his tours in Korea and Vietnam I find out that his F-86 Sabre was shot down over the Sea of Japan in Korea and that he parachuted from his F-105 Thud thirty-five miles from downtown Hanoi after being hit by a surface to air missile on May 17, 1967. He was airlifted only a few miles from a North Vietnamese Army Prison Camp.

Was it luck that the Army found him before the NVA or was it survival skills that he had learned growing up hunting in Mississippi backwoods. He not only managed to escape but also captured a NVA flag before ending his forty-eight hour tour of the Hanoi countryside. His story is of evasion, survival and rescue, but for many it was different. Their story is of survival, prison and often death. Not everyone knows what happened to their grandfather, father, brother or son. This documentary paper is dedicated to those people.

Will the American people ever know the fate of the 2,241 American soldiers unaccounted for in the Vietnam War? Three point four million Americans served in South East Asia: 58,135 never returned and only 725 Prisoners Of War were repatriated. There is no excuse why there shouldn't be sufficient data on the whereabouts of each of these missing men. In the World Wars and Korea the United States did not have the reconnaissance or rescue capabilities that it had during the Vietnam era.

There are many reasons which may explain why these "missing" men are not at home with their families. Is there an overwhelming motive for burying secrets about missing Americans? Are they really missing, or does the CIA know where they are? Is the American public being kept in the dark about prisoners because of intelligence failures and bureaucratic stupidity? Or is it all of the above?

The South Vietnam government collapsed, the North Vietnamese victory was complete. In the United States there had been considerable unrest, the sight of armed soldiers patrolling the streets had become almost commonplace, and President Johnson had been brought to the point where he felt forced to say, on 31 March 1968:

"With America's sons in the fields far away, with America's future under challenge here at home, with our hopes and the world's hopes for peace in the balance everyday, I do not believe that I should devote an hour or a day of my time to any personal partisan causes or to any duties other than the awesome duties of this office, the Presidency of your country. Accordingly, I shall not seek, and I will not accept the nomination of my Party for another term as your President" (Westmoreland 238).

In 1973 American troops were being withdrawn from South East Asia. At that time U.S. intelligence knew how many men were held captive in Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia. Intelligence also knew what prison camp they were in, the location of these camps and quite possibly the condition of the prisoners. The documents pertaining to this information and the common people who knew of it have since been destroyed.

Hanoi continues to play a cruel game with the minds and emotions of the families of the missing and stubbornly refuses to divulge information that could put many of the cases of the missing to rest for all time (Guarino 340).

Is it just Hanoi or is our government withholding information from these families? Families of missing Americans feel as if they are beating their heads against a wall of government silence. They deserve to know.

Henry Kissinger in 1973, wrote a half-hearted letter to Hanoi asking for information about 21 American journalists missing in Vietnam and Laos. Kissinger wrote the letter but inserted a strange and curious apology in the letter. He told the North Vietnamese that he had no basis for believing that the missing were alive. Why would he write such an apology?

Walter Cronkite at CBS had asked Kissinger to write the letter. Cronkite had tremendous knowledge of what was happening in Southeast Asia and a deep concern for the MIA's and POW's. Cronkite was furious that Kissinger had not demanded explanations of the whereabouts of the MIA's. He never got an answer from Kissinger as to why he took this defeatist attitude.

Nixon wanted to get the Paris Peace Agreement signed in 1973 before Watergate engulfed him. So he secretly promised more than four

billion dollars in economic aid to Hanoi and took whatever prisoners they said they had. When the government reneged on the four billion dollar promise, Hanoi hung ont the remaining prisoners in retaliation, and as a means of trying to get the money.

I suppose the Communists had studied American History and learned a lesson from the American-Indian Peace negotiations. The Communists decided to hold onto prisoners until paid-in-full.

When we look back at the Watergate scandal and Nixon resigning because of a cover-up, it is easy to believe that Nixon and his staff covered up the whereabouts of MIA's and POW's. Nixon concealed facts about Vietnam for what he called national security. Does national security mean keeping the families of MIA's and POW's in suspense? Did the government really think that we could pretend like the war never happened?

A National Security Agency specialist who worked in Laos in 1973 has testified that he and his men tracked surviving crew members of an intelligence plan that crashed in North Vietnamese territory. The crew members were taken prisoner and carried to Hanoi where they boarded a plane bound for Moscow. The startling fact is these men were taken prisoner after the Paris Peace Accords were signed and no attempt was made to rescue them.

In the early months of the Reagan administration the Joint Chiefs of Staff planned a rescue mission to bring home surviving POW's. That rescue mission like all others before was abandoned in the name of National Security. It was not a matter of National Security, but merely a matter of job security. Neither is this just a matter of bureaucratic boondoggle, many men were abandoned. Why? Maybe to cover up some secret war that went way past the official end of the Vietnam conflict. Critics of the governments cover-up are slandered and harassed for expecting their country to do the right and constitutional thing (Stevenson 210)

John Trotti was a fighter pilot in Vietnam. In his book, *Phantom Over Vietnam* he sums up his opinion of the POW/MIA issue by saying: "The dead are dead–many (if not most) of their names inscribed in our nation's capital on a memorial that one hopes will stand as a warning to those who would ever again vote to fund uncertain action–but the slate is still not clean. Now and again, the subject of MIA's rises to the public notice, but our government's policy has been to quash the issue in a spate of denials, and then lapse into silence" (Trotti 208).

There is a certain responsibility of the government to be constitu-

tional and react to this issue in a patriotic manner. Instead, the government's main objective seems to be to manipulate the media while they should be trying to bring home Americans who fought for everything that the government stands for. Many Americans have given their life for this country, now it's time their country did something in return, bring them home.

In recent visit with Charles Thornton, U.S.A.F. (Ret.) POW NO. 221 (NI NI ICHI) WWII, who spent three and one half years as a prisoner of war, I realized by looking at his collection of pictures and POW magazines that he still lives with powerful memories of the, Death March of Bataan. Everyday he and thousands of others faced death. Surviving was their main priority. By reading his poetry and stories I quickly came to the conclusion Mr. Thornton is grateful to be alive and proud of his comrades who stayed alive long enough to come home with him. But you also understand his sadness of leaving the dead, MIA's, POW's behind.

From his book, *Songs Of The Hedgehopper and the files of NI NI ICHI* by Charles Thornton. "Real hell is man's inhumanity to man in the prison and slave camps of the world. Mr. Thornton tells of many horrors through his book. In a closing statement he said, "These are dead that others may roam, free in body and spirit, in a great land, America, with the knowledge that one does not compromise with 'Slave Makers' and that it takes undaunted courage and will to remain free."

I asked Mr. Thornton to sign my copy of DEATH MARCH SURVIVORS OF BATTAN. He signed it this way, "NI NI ICHI (Charles H. Thornton) May you never know the experience of war." My reply to Mr. Thornton and to all MIA's and POW's, then and now: "If I ever do know the experience of warmay I face it with your 'undaunted courage and will to remain free.'"

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Vulnerability

John Belknap

Emperor William Byther had assembled the top Brass for a very important meeting. To the Emperor's left was his second-in-command, Field Marshal Rawson. The Field Marshal had been with the Emperor since their early days at West Point. They had gained control of the United States through shrewd political maneuvers and propaganda. The rest of the Western Hemisphere had fallen under their superb military strategies.

The Field Marshal could give orders to all personnel in the Imperial Military except for the Emperor himself. Field Marshal Iva Rawson was the most powerful woman in the world. Also seated at the table were Helmut Rhinehardt, Commander of the Secret Police; Field Marshal Philip Compere, Commander of all Imperial Forces in the Western Hemisphere; Admiral Richard Drake, Commander of the Imperial Navy; and Colonel Vincent Spivey, Commander of the Imperial Air Force (IAF).

"This is the situation," the Emperor began. "We have just finished negotiations with Sultan Husain of the Persian Empire and..."

"We need the sultan's resources to begin our European and Asiatic campaigns," Field Marshal Rawson interrupted. "His empire is vast, and his numerous army is commanded by capable generals. In an all-out war we would be at a disadvantage."

"The sultan will ally himself with us only under the condition that I marry his daughter," the Emperor said. "The problem with this is that I am engaged to another. I need advice on what course to take."

"You could marry the Arab and keep the other as a concubine," Helmut suggested.

"I have considered that possibility, but our love for each other isn't physical. If I married the Arab, my successors would have mixed blood."

"Why not marry both?" Admiral Drake asked.

"The Arab probably wouldn't object since her culture allows it, but Mary Ann would be opposed to the idea. Besides, I don't think I could stand having two wives," the Emperor said.

"I suppose you will have to decide between your dreams of global domination and your happiness," Colonel Spivey said.

The Emperor fell silent. His officers began debating and discussing other plans of action and their consequences.

"Gentlemen, I believe I have reached a solution to the problem," the Emperor said suddenly. With that he explained his solution.

The next day there was a great commotion among the legions of the Imperial Army. Troops were moving; tanks were lining up; IAF fighter jets were taking off. There was going to be a great procession when Emperor Byther came to deliver his decision to the sultan.

The citizens of Baghdad cowered in fear as the infamous and ruthless man and his invincible war machine rolled by their humble shops and homes. As they drew closer to the center of the city, fewer tanks and soldiers proceeded. At last the Emperor arrived at the courtyard of the palace where a surprised sultan waited.

After he had regained his composure, the sultan asked, "Have you reached your decision?"

"I have," the Emperor replied.

"Will you take my daughter and form the alliance, or will you refuse and watch your army be slaughtered?"

"Neither," the Emperor stated calmly. "You will surrender all your military forces and pledge alliance with me."

"How will you possibly make me agree to those terms?" the sultan laughed.

"You have no choice. Even now my navy is attacking your coastal cities and naval bases. My air force is bombing your oil fields and army installations. My army has silently captured your capital and is about to plunder the stores, murder the people and burn the whole place to the ground. But most importantly, you and your court are my captives." As he spoke these words, about two dozen Bushmasters, an elite branch of commandos, appeared from behind the bushes and aimed their guns at the sultan and his court.

After some time the sultan managed to regain his composure. He became angry.

"What have I done to you that you treat me in such a manner?" he asked. "I offered you my daughter's hand in marriage! The thanks I get is the discovery that you want to decimate my country!"

"Your pitiful 'offer' was nothing more than a plot to get your hands on my domain," the Emperor retorted. "As soon as we were married and I was asleep on the wedding night, you were going to have your daughter kill me. Since I have no children, she would become Empress as my widow. She would then turn all of her power over to you, and you would be the ruler. Did you actually think I was so naive? I have worked too hard, and too many lives would have been wasted to let you

gain the Empire through my mistake."

"How did you learn of my plan?" asked an astonished sultan.

"Your prime minister told us."

"How did you extract it from him?"

"If gold won't work, torture will. My secret police surpass even the Gestapo in torture techniques."

"You might think you have conquered us, but we will fight you to the death!" an angry sultan declared as he shook his fist at the Emperor.

"So you want to fight to the death?" the Emperor asked.

"I do!" the sultan declared.

"Your wish is my command," the Emperor said. Then turning to the Bushmasters he said, "Ready, aim, fire!"

That night after the royal family had been disposed of and the order of plundering and burning the cities was being carried out, Emperor William and his officers were celebrating their victory. Broiled red snapper imported from the United States was the entree'. Various wines taken from the sultan's wine cellars were generously distributed among the revelers. Everyone was guzzling wine and eating fish as if there were no tomorrow.

Things were going well until the Emperor suddenly dropped his fork and clutched his throat. He was gasping for air. Amid the noise and confusion none of the drunken revelers noticed their choking leader. He hit a few to get their attention, but they only laughed and took another drink.

The Emperor clutched his Field Marshal and fell to the floor. His face was blue.

He had possessed greater military skill than either Napoleon Bonaparte or Alexander the Great. He ruled an Empire which surpassed all others in size--it consisted of two full continents, the coasts of Africa and now the entire Middle East. The mighty Emperor now lay dead on the floor of an Arab castle. The murderer of the great man had been a fishbone.

First Place
Scholarship Award
Copiah Academy

Tigress

Caryn Amy Smith

The sun is a tiger eye,
The unblinking eye of a Tigress
Who roams the sky always, stalking stars.
The full moon is her kitten, white as seafoam;
The crescent moon is her claw, curved to hook a cloud
Or a celestial Rabbit.
Dark of moon is when she sleeps.
Stars are her prey, heavenly Mice, forever blinking their
Shiny twinkling eyes of light.
At dawn, she yawns and swallows all the stars.
Then she arches her long orange-red-violet-striped spine
And open her glowing Eye at the world.
At sunset, she stretches her blazing body
Along the bowed horizon.
She gazes redly at the world, then
Flicks her darkening Tail,
And spits out the stars with a cough.
She grooms her indio-tangarine-scarlet Fur,
Stretches,
Shakes regally,
And settles into a fading
Feline
Slumber.

First Place
Scholarship Award
Brookhaven Academy

The Bargain

Shirley Ann Love

He came on one of the worst nights of the year. Heavy rain, high winds, and a pitch black night was all about him. The air was so thick it seemed like you could cut it with a knife.

Suddenly he was there, and his clothes was of the blackest of black. The smell of smoldering wool was all about him and his hair was plastered against a chalk-grey face. Breathing the air that moved around him gave you a feeling of desperation and fear. His face held no expression as he slowly made three knocks at the old man's door.

The old man knew deep down what the dark figure was after even before he asked, yet still he asked. "What do you want?" the old man shouted between the wailing winds and pouring rain.

"I came for you," the Man in Black replied with a still cold voice. "I came for you, Charles Winston Brown!"

"No!" the old man cried. "Not NOW. I'm not ready yet!"

"But I have a quota to make," the Man in Black replied.

"Please," the old man bargained, "take someone else. I'll do anything you ask, just leave me alone, please!"

The Man in Black began to smile. " To save your life, you must take a life," he said.

So the old man began to think to himself of how he would go about taking a life, and whose life would he take. For days his only thoughts were those of finding a person to kill and trying to figure out a way of not getting caught. Finally, he thought of old Miss Womack who lived in his neighborhood. She had no family and know one would miss her, he thought. She had been there it seemed like forever. Even as a child, he wondered how and why she had lived so long. She was even old then, he remembered.

That night he decided to pay her a visit. As he made small conversation with her, he suddenly grabbed a pillow from her bed and began to smother her. She started to struggle and fight. Large beads of perspiration began to roll into his eyes and bells of fear seemed to shut out every surrounding noise. Suddenly he heard laughter. As he raised the pillow from the old lady's face, she began to laugh once again. Her eyes were like flames of fire, her hands like ice. The old man began to gasp and hold his chest.

"I, too, have made a bargain with death," she screamed as her fingers slowly closed around his already limp neck. In the distance, the Man in Black laughed as he tallied up his total for the day with another mark.

Do What!
You Mean You Aren't Going to Pay This Claim
Rob Hanks

Everyone who owns a car has some type of insurance whether it be liability, collision, or full coverage. The average premium for a single male between the ages of 16 and 25 is about $110.00 a month, of course, it varies between the numbers and what type of car you drive and so on and so on...

I personally have paid over $4000.00 worth of insurance premiums: therefore, I think I have grounds enough to 'bitch' about what has happened to me.

It all started one morning on my way to a church softball game. I was cruising along at about 55 miles per hour, when out from the greenery alongside the road, "pops" this deer, (the biggest deer I have seen in the state of Mississippi). Right in front of the car. BANG! $1047.00 worth of damage to my car. I didn't have time to avoid it.

A long confusing piece of paper with road diagrams and an "in your own words..." section was handed to me. All I wanted to say was "I hit a flipping deer and messed up my car." But all they wanted to know was my driver's license number, tag number and the number to the Fish and Game Office.

I stood there with a dumb look on my face for about ten minutes. All I could say was, "What about my car?" All the officer could say was, "Call your insurance company, there is nothing more I can do."

Immediately I thought, "Oh great, my first claim and it's over a confused buck. It won't be so bad." Boy was I wrong!

First, the lines were all busy: It took me three hours of hitting redial on the phone. Finally a Miss B answers, "Hello, Geico Insurance, may I help you?" I told her the problem. After about ten minutes of my story, not even half over, she said, "We do not handle that type of claim at this office, call the Highway Department and get an accident report sent to us by them. We should be able to help you in about six weeks." Click, she hung up on me.

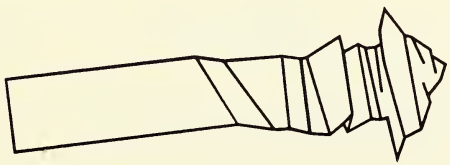
Down to the Highway Department I go. A bunch of humble jumble with a "back-woods hick" who needlessly has a degree in business management, (I saw his degree on the wall). This man was

talking to me in some kind of broken English I could hardly understand, with a bunch of "I'm sorry to inform you, but..." In his country accent, "I hate it for you, but call your insurance man..."

So, I called Miss B back. After arguing for half an hour, I asked to speak with the "Head Honcho" a Mr. X. Sometime later he finally got to the point! "I am sorry but this company cannot pay your claim under bi-law PA 302.5 of the Underwriter's Guide." I asked, "Do what? You mean you are not going to pay this claim?" He replied, "I am sorry, Mr. Hanks, but that is the rule."

So, after $4000.00 worth of premiums over the past two and a half years, with no claims, they didn't pay the claim and they cancelled my policy.

My advise to anyone wanting to buy a car, DON'T. CONSIDER THE CONSEQUENCES, AND WALK!!!



Morning

Angela Johnson

My head rests heavily on a strong shoulder
each day awakening
light filtering through slumber...

He and I entwined in dreams
of yesterday and tomorrow
touch and lie in silence.

Rising with the morning sun
embracing gently
time nonexistent for a short moment...

He and I leave dreams
of yesterday and tomorrow
and begin today.

Paw-Paw

Angela Johnson

Picking flowers or cleaning up the green yard
sweating and working into the late afternoon
he gracefully moves and gently laughs
while using his giant hands.

Telling how the hummingbird flies...
Singing God's songs so beautifully...
Watching me play for hours at a time...
Gladly helping anyone in need...

Paw-Paw, sitting silently, looks at his flowers
swaying in the breeze.

Diary Entries Near Christmastime

Brad Garner

Dear Diary,

This is going to be the worst Christmas ever!! Right now I'm out of school for the holidays. You might be thinking, "What's so bad about that," but believe me, it gets a lot worse. "Out for the holidays means that I'm stuck at home with my cheery, goodie-two-shoes family. All my friends are out of town, and I can't find anywhere to run to get out of this house - this house of carol-singing, light-a-blinking, goodie-bringing, and Christmas-list-a-thinking. I just can't understand why anyone would really pretend to be so happy over a fat old man who carries around wooden trains and ragdolls and gives them to snotty-nosed little kids! Why, Santa doesn't even have a decent mode of transportation; he flies around in an over-sized ice skate pulled by an oddball deer with a sore nose. On top of that, Mr. Jelly Belly doesn't even exist. I just can't understand these people!!

Dear Diary,

Great news! All the kinfolk are coming over Tuesday. I really hope they're all as cheery as all of us already here. Well, I guess I won't complain too much if there's plenty of dressing and fudge cake. I'll go to my room and eat alone and watch *The Simpsons*; their Christmas specials are the only good ones on T. V. Oh yeah! If Aunt Collette pinches my cheeks this year, I think I'll pinch hers back. And I mean really pinch them. Won't she look suave when she has a big blue bruise on each side of her swollen face when she opens her blusterous mouth to sing in the choir Sunday morning!!

Dear Diary,

I heard on the tube that it'll snow Wednesday. Maybe Christmas won't be so bad after all. I can pelt Judy with snowballs. Maybe she'll even conjure up some tears to humor Mom. Gotta do something for fun around here.

Dear Diary,

On Christmas Eve and the snow hit one day early. All the lights went out, so we all crammed into the Aerostar and drove over to the church to see the cantata. (Aunt Collette didn't bless the choir with her nasal-tone alto. I know they all missed her greatly!!) I have to admit the cantata was pretty good, but I'd rather have seen *The Simpsons*. Something does stick out in my mind, though: why was Mary so happy to give birth in a stable, and why were those wise men willing to travel so far to see baby Jesus? If I wanted to give my regards, I'd have sent a card not ridden on a humpy camel through a barren desert and guided by a mere star. I guess Christmas is more than just Santa Claus, but I still can't see why we can't skip all the jingle bells and noels and go straight to New Year's.

Dear Diary,

Last night I had the strangest dream! I really forget most of it, but I do remember these strange ghosts visiting me. Well, anyway this morning I woke up and right off Aunt Collette came up to me and told me, "You're sooo cute!" and pinched my cheeks. Much to my surprise, I just hugged her in return, I don't know why, but I did it, and it felt good - well sort of good. We all sat around the tree and opened presents, but I forgot to get all of mine out from under the tree right away; I guess I was too busy seeing what everyone else got.

I think now that I see that Christmas is a time of giving and that maybe my family isn't so bad. Maybe next year I'll help decorate the tree or even complement Uncle Ralph's fruit cake. But you'll never catch me singing those all-too-perky carols. No Siree! ...Well maybe one verse if Granpa asks me to drown Aunt Collette.

Second Place
Wesson Attendance Center

How the Firebird Flew

James Sessums

It was a hot, moonless night on the back roads of the Indian Reservations in Philadelphia. My cousin Barry and I were riding around wasting gas and trying to find something to do. Along this dark, gravel road, we spotted headlights in the far distance. As the headlights of the car came closer, we started to slow down because the gravel road was not that wide. When the car was beside us it came to a stop. It was Candy Roberts and Christy Brister who went to school with Barry.

I had met them at Barry's fair cabin a few weeks back and we became good friends. Christy and Candy were on their way to the fairgrounds because some students from Philadelphia High School were throwing a party. Candy asked us if we wanted to go. Barry and I were not sure that we wanted to go because we do not get along with people from Philadelphia High School.

Barry rode back to town with Christy and Candy to make sure that they didn't leave without us. After they picked me up in Candy's red 1985 Firebird, Barry and I were in the back seat of the car listening to the radio. Candy was taking it slow and easy down the dark and curvey road, when all of a sudden a dark-colored car came around the sharp curve with no lights on and on the wrong side of the road. Candy swerved to miss the car and flew off the side of the road and hit a utility pole. The impact of the car on the pole made it break into and fall on the car splitting the car in half. Then the transformer from the pole fell onto the car. The impact made the transformer explode and catch on fire.

When we noticed that the car was on fire, Barry and I kicked out the back window and escaped, but Candy and Christy were trapped because the doors were jammed and the seatbelts wouldn't come apart. All I could do was to try to break the windshield out but even between Barry and me, we couldn't.

I will never forget the face that Candy showed during her last few seconds of her life. I have never seen someone in that much pain before. When I die, I hope that death comes quick and painless because I have personally seen death in progress.

The old man who ran us off the road was drunk, and all they did to him was put him on probation for two years. The courts should have

put him in prison for the rest of his life without parole or they should take his life for the lives that he took.

I will never forget the night the Firebird flew over the hill and caught on fire. Today, Barry, who is now nineteen and a junior at Mississippi State, still has to go to a psychiatrist so he can try to forget that tragic night in Philadelphia. I still get upset when I think about Candy and Christy burning to death in the Firebird.

The family of these two girls would have never thought that their children's life would have been taken away at such a young age. They didn't know that when Christy and Candy left the house their lives would never be same again.

A few days after the funeral I went to the junkyard where the remains of Candy's car were taken after the wreck. I looked inside and there was a small piece of Candy's sweater stuck to the seat. I took the small piece of sweater because it would be the last thing I would ever see of Candy. While I was looking at the sweater I saw a bracelet dangling from the door handle. It must have come off Christy's arm when she was fighting to get out. To this day I still have the bracelet and the part of Candy's sweater. That's the memory that remains with me the most about the night the Firebird flew.

Terminal

Carol Honea

Terminal - the word once brought to mind
A waiting area full of people with tickets in their hand.
They would grumble for having to wait,
Wanting only to get on to what lies ahead.

Now you are in the terminal
Having every right to grumble.
Wanting to know what lies ahead
While looking at a ticket marked "Cancer."

Sonnet #1

John David Martin

In the beginning of the big; nowhere
Back when time stood still and space was just space,
Good looked on the Earth with a confused stare.
From the heavens poured a dark smokey lace.
Spirits found bodies and made homes of them;
Men killed men and the Earth was blood-covered.
The beast was ruling from Earth's every rim.
Listen for the beast can you hear him walk?
Finding empty souls which the demons stalk.
Marching forward with bloody rampancy
We see the world as one big collision.
A better future is just a vision.

Second place
Wesson Attendance Center

I Wonder

David C. Hennington

I wonder how many grains of sand
are on every shore of every land.
I'd like to swin in every sea
but only one is close to me.
So I'll be content to stay right here
on the shore so very near,
and wonder how many grains of sand
are resting here within my hand.

Third place
Wesson Attendance Center

The Friendship Ring

Angela Johnson

The majestic oak tree stood just as it had twelve years ago with limbs outstretched in a downward fashion. Just beneath the limbs, encircling the huge trunk, a small space remained empty where children of times past had played.

Rebecca hunched down slowly and crawled under the limbs into the cool, shaded area. She looked around while memories of childhood danced through the leaves of the oak. The secret meeting place still looked the way Rebecca remembered, and she felt the same chill of excitement trickle through her body she used to feel when she came here.

A sudden thud in the field startled Rebecca, and she hid behind the trunk in the opposite direction from where the noise had come. Without hesitation she quietly giggled to herself. She remembered how Tracey and Kim would have done the same exact thing. The three of them would always hide when any little sound echoed through the field into the musty dampness of their clubhouse. It wasn't really a clubhouse; it was more of a club tree. They had called it the "Friendship Tree," and they called themselves the "Friendship Club."

"All right, we can now begin our club meeting," Tracey sternly proclaimed, pacing back and forth under the protection of the great oak.

"What should we talk about first, Becky?" asked Kim.

"Well, we've got to figure out if Mrs. Murray is a witch or not," Becky replied.

"Good idea," Kim whispered. "Then we can talk about boys!"

Tracey sighed. "Let's just get on with the meeting, please."

Rebecca flinched as a tree limb gently scratched her arm, abruptly bringing her back from the last meeting. Tears began sliding down her cheeks on to the ground. All of the pain she had held in for so long suddenly wanted to escape. She had known this moment would come once she stepped back into their secret place.

Rebecca could no longer deny her feelings. She had to accept the truth. Tracey was dead and had been for twelve long years. They were all ten years old when it happened.

"Becky! Becky!" Kim screamed, shaking Rebecca for some

small response. "They can't find Tracey, and the school is burning down! Becky, are you listening? Tracey and Mrs. Murray are still in the school. Mrs. Murray went in to get Tracey, and they haven't come out yet!"

Her body shaking traumatically with each breath she could manage, Rebecca slumped to the cold, hard ground. Her heart ached and throbbed, and soon darkness consumed her.

Awaking out of her slumber, Rebecca realized it was getting close to sunset. She unsuccessfully tried to move her body and decided it would be better to rest until she regained some control. She logically remembered where she was and what must have happened.

Memories had come rushing back to her, memories her mind had safely tucked away. Her body had gone numb from the shock, but sharp pains in her legs and arms were emphasizing she would soon be able to move.

Carefully turning her head, she noticed a dark hole at the base of the tree's trunk. The last rays of the evening sun glistened on some foreign object inside. Rebecca easily slid her hand in and grasped the shining object.

As she brought her hand closer to her face, she smiled. The object was an oval shaped, emerald-green ring. It was the ring Tracey had brought to one of their meetings and labeled the "Friendship Ring."

Pushing herself up from the ground and standing was not as hard a task as she had expected. The ring seemed to have given her strength. Glancing around the club place one last time, Rebecca put the "Friendship Ring" on her pinkie finger and crawled from under the tree out of the past.

Childhood Memories

Darlene Calcote

Memories are always something to be cherished. Most of my memories are not from boyfriends or any of my other friends, they are from my childhood. The things I remember most are from my grandma's house. My grandma has just turned seventy-six, and it has made me realize how time passes by so quickly. It seems like it was only yesterday that I was up there playing and acting crazy.

I remember playing with all of my cousins when they came to visit. We had some fun times together. My first cousin Shelly, who lived in Clinton, would come up every summer for a week to stay at grandma's. We were only a few months apart in age. I always wanted to be just like her. To me she was so lucky and had it made because she lived in a big neighborhood and had a lot of friends. I lived down here in the sticks like a little country bumpkin.

Some memories of my grandpa are funny. One time my cousins and I were snooping around in his room. We looked under his mattress and found a bottle of whiskey. We all got so upset and thought he was a drunk. We told my grandma about it and confronted my grandpa with the bottle. He got mad at us for snooping and told us to put that bottle back under the mattress because it was his medicine. We put it back, but we didn't believe him. The next day we went up there while he was gone to town and poured every bit of it out and filled it back up with water. We thought that water would be better medicine for him. OH, was he mad when he found that bottle!

One thing I will never forget about my grandpa is that he would always get one piece of gum and chew it for days and days. At the end of the day he would stick his gum on top of a cabinet in the kitchen until the next day. I still, to this day, do not know why he did that. But anyway, one morning before he got out of bed, we got his gum down and poured pepper all in it. When he got up, he came in and drank his coffee, then went to get his gum. He took it from the counter and started chewing it. He chewed and chewed. Then he calmly said, "Man, this gum is hot today," and kept on chewing.

I guess our main hangout was the barn. We would make club houses, and haunted houses. That big old barn seemed like our home. We practically stayed out there all day long. Grandpa would get so mad

at us because we always messed up his hay for the cows.

The barn was always our secret spot, but one side of the barn was off limits to us. My grand-mother stored a lot of things in it like old jars and stuff. She told us never to go on that side. What did she have to say that for? We went out there to discover over a hundred glass jars all boxed up. Grandma used all of these for canning her vegetables. Needless to say, my brother, my cousins and I "busted" every jar in the barn against the wall. There was glass everywhere. I think that day for a minute grandma would like to have killed us. When I go up to Grandma's now, I don't even go near the barn. It is totally different to me. I think of all of the rats and snakes that could be bedded up in it. Back then we weren't worried about anything.

I think one of the scariest things that ever happened to me up at my grandma's happened when I saw a snake in the house, not in the barn. I always loved to play "dress up." My grandma had some neat things that she let me play with. I was snooping around one day in the guest bedroom. I opened the closet door and the very first thing I saw was a big snake, the biggest snake I had ever seen just hanging there across the rack like a belt. Screaming, I ran out of the room and into the kitchen where my grandma and little sister were. I started crying and trying to tell them I saw a snake. They thought I was joking because when I was telling them what kind of snake it was, I said it was real big and had diamonds on it. What I was trying to say was that its skin had diamond-shaped markings on it.

They called my daddy at the house. He told me that if he went through all of the trouble to take everything out of the closet and there was no snake, I was definitely getting a whipping. I was praying that my eyes hadn't played tricks on me. Sure enough there was a snake. Daddy said it was in the corner of the closet behind a board. They never got the snake out of the closet and I guarantee you that I never went snooping around in the closet again. Just like everyone else, I have a lot of memories. But the ones I will never forget are the times I spent at my grandparents.

The Holy Terrors

Melissa James

October 13 was an average day to most people except Theressa Allen. On this day she had the worst experience any baby-sitter could ever imagine.

Theressa was at home counting up the money she had saved for a special outfit she wanted to buy for the next week's dance. She counted and counted, but no matter how many times she counted she came up thirty dollars short. Theressa paced up and down in her room trying to think of ways to earn the money. As she thought, she heard the phone ring.

"Hello?"

"May I speak to Theressa Allen?"

"This is she."

Theressa, this is Ann Mallon. A friend of yours named Kim Forsythe said that you were a great baby-sitter, and I really need one tonight."

"Well, I don't know..."

"I'll pay you thirty dollars."

"Okay. What time shall I be there?"

"Seven o'clock would be wonderful and Theressa, thank you."

Theressa was skeptical. She didn't know why Kim had recommended her; they usually didn't get along very well. She ran to get her things and walked out the door. All she had to do was baby-sit for one night, and she would have the money she needed.

Theressa followed the instructions Mrs. Mallon had given her over the telephone. She soon arrived at a large two-story brick house. Theressa rang the doorbell, and it was opened by a tall beautiful woman.

"You must be Theressa. I'm Mrs. Mallon. Please come in."

"You have a beautiful home, Mrs. Mallon," said Theressa in a small voice.

"Thank you, Theressa. Now, Jack, my husband, and I will be out until ten o'clock. I'll introduce you to the children," she replied.

"That will be fine," Theressa said with some uncertainty.

"Kids! Come in here for a minute," Mrs. Mallon called.

A few minutes later three blonde-haired boys came downstairs.

They looked up at Theressa with big blue eyes, and she knew she was going to make thirty dollars easily.

Mrs. Mallon began, "This is Mark. He's seven. Timmy is five; he's the one with the green shirt on. The one with the blue shirt on is James. He's three."

"Hello, boys," Theressa said smiling.

The Mallons left after the introductions. Now Theressa was alone with the boys. The boys looked at each other and smiled. Theressa got the impression she was in for a long night.

"Timmy, you've got something on your shirt," Theressa said.

"I don't care," he replied with scorn.

"Hey, Theressa, look at me."

"James! Get your head out of the banister!" she cried.

"I can't," he said smugly.

"What? Don't move, I'll be right there."

"Theressa, help!"

"What's wrong, Mark?"

"The dishwasher blew up!"

"Oh, no!"

Theressa ran into the kitchen to see what had happened to the dishwasher. When she opened the kitchen door suds came pouring out of the room. Someone had put bubble bath in it. She ran back to James and finally got his head out of the banister after struggling for thirty minutes. Theressa then ran back to the kitchen just in time to see Timmy squirt paint all over the floor.

"Timmy! What are you doing?"

"I'm decorating the floor."

"With paint?"

"Yes. That way it'll stick."

Theressa got Timmy out of the kitchen and found Mark and James. She took them to their room. After two hours of mischief, they were exhausted. Theressa put the boys to bed, and then she went to the kitchen.

Theressa looked at the kitchen, and then she looked at the clock. She had an hour to get the kitchen cleaned up before the Mallons got home. Theressa put her hand on her head and felt something sticky. One of the boys had put bubble gum in her hair. Theressa sighed and

began to clean up the kitchen . She scrubbed the floors to get the paint off. She then mopped the floors. Soon all the bubbles were gone.

Theressa had just put the mop up when the Mallons arrived.

"Hello, Theressa. Did everything go okay tonight?' Mrs. Mallon asked.

"Yes, Mrs. Mallon."

"Good! Do you think you could baby-sit tomorrow night?"

"Oh! I'm sorry I've got plans,"Theressa answered with her eyes to the floor.

Theressa hated herself for lying to Mrs. Mallon, but there was no way she was coming back to that house with those holy terrors.

"Mrs. Mallon, Kim Forsythe might be able to baby-sit."

"Well, I'll give here a call tomorrow. Here's your money and thank you for coming."

When she got home she called Kim.

"Hello?"

"Is this Kim?"

"Yes, it is."

"Hi! This is Theressa. I just want to thank you for recommending me to the Mallons. Those three children were just angels! It was the easiest thirty dollars I've ever made!"

"You made thirty dollars!"

"Oh, Mrs. Mallon needs a baby-sitter for tomorrow. Do you think you can do it?"

"Oh yes!"

"Well, I'll see you at school. Bye!"

Theressa hung up the phone and smiled. This time she didn't feel bad about lying.

Third place
Copiah-Academy

Life from a Teenager's Point of View

Amy Marie Ramsey

I mourn the passing
of a loved one,
and cry in joy
of a family birth.

I laugh at the charming
wit of a friend,
lash out in anger
at the frustrations of life,
and celebrate in happiness
at a precious moment in life.

But most important of all,
I love others as I am loved.

Honorable mention
Crystal Springs Attendance Center

Spring

Jennifer Russell

Bees busily flying from flower to flower,
Drops of dew splash on the ground from the
Leaves of a rose,
Trees budding and waking from their
Long winter sleep.
I gaze with awe as nature awakes.

Honorable mention
Copiah Academy

Alcohol and Drugs Do Affect Work Habits and Productivity

Deemie Montgomery

Statistics show that the most common cause of job difficulties is the excessive use of alcohol or other drugs. Corporations and labor unions are finding that programs for the treatment of these diseases are of benefit to both employees and industry in terms of increased productivity, decreased costs in sick pay, and absenteeism. Alcohol alone affects the health and productivity of almost 8% of any work force.

There are two important differences between alcohol abuse and drug abuse in America and these differences affect how these problems appear within the work world. There are an estimated five to nine million problem drinkers in America. About 97% of these people are employed, and 90% of them have worked for 10 to 20 years, comprising up to 8% of any average work force. They come from all social classes and are employed at all levels of industry: 45% managerial and professional, 25% whitecollar, and 30% bluecollar.

Presented by the New York State Drug Abuse Control Commission, a 1970 survey by Calahan measured problem drinking not by the amount of alcohol consumed but by the degree to which the individual's behavior and social functioning were impaired by drinking-related problems. These included family difficulties, job-related problems, legal and financial troubles, and health impairment. Calahan found that 9% of the total group questioned indicated a level of drinking-related difficulties adequate for the researchers to regard the respondents as problem drinkers. They believed that these problem drinkers could take their alcohol into the work place.

Compared with alcohol abuse, the population experiencing impaired functioning because of drug use is smaller and less likely to be employed for long periods of time. Government estimates of heroin addicts range from 350,000 to 500,000, but most of these individuals are not likely to be employed for any length of time. Drug use, like alcohol use, spans all classes, ages, and job types. It is clear, therefore, not only that there are many more problem drinkers in the U.S. than problem drug users, but that problem drinkers are more likely to be employed and to remain employed.

Alcohol is legal and socially approved. On certain occasions,

drunkenness is expected. But what happens when these alcoholics celebrate all through the night and are still celebrating at work? Or they are so hungover the next morning that it impairs their job function? Alcohol is an anesthetic; its action is primarily upon the function of the brain. In general, the effect of anesthetics is first upon the higher centers of the brain which control thought and emotion, those functions which dominate behavior.

Problem drinking costs industry from $10.7 billion to $20.7 billion annually. Lost productivity is not the only cost to industry. The National Council of Alcoholism estimates that each problem drinker costs his employer on the average of $3000 a year in sick pay, accidents, lost production, and especially in the case of executives, bad judgement. The employer must also deal with the drinker's absenteeism, inefficiency, and inadequate performance, and also with his effect on his fellow workers' morale and job performance.

A drinker's work performance also affects the work conditions of his coworkers. These coworkers see that the drinker does less work but is paid the same. In turn, they adjust their work performance to match the drinker. They also reverse the issues, disguise fears, and rationalize and reassure one another by emphasizing those dangers to which the excessive drinker exposes himself.

Drug use results in the same costs as alcohol, but there are no estimates of total costs to industry and little information on the ways in which drugs impair performance at work. Amphetamines, for example, may improve and increase performance in certain types of jobs. Although excessive use is extremely hazardous, there is still much controversy over whether marijuana use impairs all kinds of performance.

Certain kinds of jobs seem to encourage problem drinking or drug use. For example, assembly line manufacturing. If someone working on the line feels the pressure of frustration, he or she may turn to alcohol or drugs. This person may put his piece of the product in wrong which could result in an injury to the consumer. In turn, the consumer could sue the company.

Salesmen and field representatives usually drive to different sites depending on their job. If these men or women are under the influence of drugs or alcohol, their actions could become fatal not only to themselves but to those innocent people around them.

In business meetings, mild intoxication is usually an exaggerated expression of the emotions. The speaker talks and laughs more than is customary for him; his amusement is out of proportion to the subject of the conversation. He has an increased feeling of well being, good fellowship, and self admiration, especially for his wit, and a vague sensation of detachment from all but his immediate surroundings. There are no marked incoordinations, but his actions are aggressive and exaggerated. The intellectual functions are not greatly impaired, but there is some narrowing of interests and some loss of memory. This instability of emotions, in turn, makes any effort toward a goal impossible. The cheerful attitude during the meeting is only a coverup for his or her feelings of insecurity.

Employees in the heavy industry such as construction are also at risk of injury to themselves and their coworkers. They generally lose working time as a result of acute intoxication or its after effects. Some habitual heavy drinkers manage to carry on their work in spite of their habits and are not detected.

In the early stages of employee behavior, only mild behavioral changes, absenteeism, overreaction to criticism, missed deadlines, complaints of sickness are noticed. As the stages progress, the absenteeism, general behavior, and performance decrease. Prolonged unpredictable absences, completely undependable behavior, and physical deterioration become visible. At this point the employer should be careful when approaching the employee. His conduct is unpredictable, reactions unreliable, and attitude irresponsible. This alcoholic is unintentionally capable of assault.

Alcohol and drug use does affect the behavior and output of employees. It dominates their views and makes clear thinking difficult. The best thing to do is get them out of the workplace and into a program for alcoholism and/or drug abuse before it is too late for them or their coworkers.

College Life

Brian McDonald

When I think,
My mind is a color-bomb
Exploding a million sparkling streaks
In a hundred directions.

When I write poetry,
I feel like breaking somebody.
Brick buildings crush the spirit.

When I write a novel,
The sun is shining,
The air is clear and clean.
Words flow like a waterfall.

When I draw a picture,
Music drifts powerfully
Through my pencil.
I create a perfect vision.

When I go to bed,
I let my mind drift,
And I ponder my philosophy
Before I fall asleep:
Life's too short for ugly chicks.

Stages of Death

Willie Barber

Characters:
Mrs. Mary Delanny, 68, mean and stubborn
Doctor Benton, 49, cancer specialist
Lesia Delanny, 40, Mrs. Delanny's daughter
Nurse, 51
Old friend, Mrs. Mary Delanny's best friend
Ghost of Mrs. Delanny's dead husband
Young Male Nurses, 25

Act 1- Scene 1

The Scene: The action of the play takes place in a hospital room and hallway. The room consists of a hospital bed, two dressers, and a closet. One-half of the stage is Mrs. Mary Delanny's room and the other half is the nurse's desk and hallway. Mrs. Delanny has just arrived from the ex-ray room. She is being helped into the bed by two male nurses. Her appearance implies that she is a very old lady with long gray hair and wrinkled skin. She also has a very high temper. The two men seem to be having problems getting Mrs. Delanny back into her bed.

Mrs. Delanny: Young man, don't you dare put your hands back on my breast!
Young Male: Ma'am, I sorry...I was merely trying to help you back into your bed. Are you comfortable now?
Mrs. Delanny: Yes, I sa'pose, now leave me bee.

(Male nurse leaves the room and Dr. Benton enters.)

Mrs. Delanny: Ok, Doctor, spill the beans, what's my problem this time?
Doctor: Mrs. Delanny, please don't get upset, but I am afraid I'm going to have to operate. Your cancer seems to be spreading.

Mrs. Delanny (dubiously) Doctor, you said that the last time I was in this awful place. I told you I could fight this cancer. You aren't going to stick anymore of those painful needles in me anymore. I just want to leave this terrible place, for the last time I tell you, I'm not sick. I refuse to have another operation.

Doctor: (sincerely) Mrs. Delanny, out of all respect, you won't live much longer without the operation. Our staff can't stop the disease from spreading if you don't agree to have the operation.

Mrs. Delanny: I am not going to die I told you. Doctor don't look so sad, you will still continue to get my medicaid money. Let me out of here, I'll be fine!

Doctor: Mrs. Delanny, whether you agree to have the operation or not I can't let you out in the shape you are in.

Mrs. Delanny: Ok, so be it. But I am still not going through an operation. Death took my husband, Bobby, because of an operation, but it won't take me.

(Doctor leaves the room and entering the room is Mrs. Delanny's daughter.)

Lesia: (looking worried) Mama, why are you being such a stubborn old goat? I heard what you told Dr. Benton. You know you need this operation. Mrs. Delanny: Listen here, honey, I'm sixty-eight years old and I ant leaving this world until I see you with a man. You are going to be the only Delanny out of our family who never got married. What do I sa'pose to tell my friends?

Lesia: Mother, tell them what you want. I can't help it because the right guy hasn't come along. Most of those friends of yours never had a man themselves. And as far as I'm concerned you can tell those old buzzards to keep their whale noses out of my business.

Mrs. Delanny: Honey, I don't mean to make you feel bad, but it's the truth. Remember the Sunday, when Rev. Boldy thought that you were my mother. Hell, you know any time a man of God think you're old, something's wrong with you.

Lesia: (keeping calm) Mother, you're getting off the subject. Please Mother, have the operation. You are all I have. I don't won't to see you go.

Mrs. Delanny: I am not having it, I'm not, I'm not, just give me until tomorrow and I'll be fine.

Lesia: (becomes upset) You need to grow up. This is nothing to joke about. It's been three months now and you are just getting worse. You are only acting like a spoiled child.

Mrs. Delanny: (speaks loudly) Who are you calling a spoiled child? I raised you. That's what wrong with you younguns today. When your parents get old you yell at them and lose trust in them. I may be old, but I can still pop your big head.

(Lesia leaves the room in tears and meets the doctor in the hallway.)

Lesia: (comes down) Doctor Benton, she won't listen. She's just so stubborn. It seems like the older she becomes the worst she becomes.

Doctor: Lesia, your mother will die without that operation, and I can't do anything to help her, without her permission. Mary is beginning to sound like a patient I had a year ago. The guy was dying from lung cancer. Before he finally died, he went through a psychological change which occurs in dying patients. If I can remember, I think the stages were denial, anger, bargaining, depression, and then finally acceptance. Let's just hope your mother isn't experiencing these. I don't know... maybe she's under all that medicine right now. It could be affecting the way she is acting. I will try to talk to her again.

Doctor: (entering Delanny's room) Mrs. Delanny, for the last time, will you agree to an operation?

Mrs. Delanny: No, doctor, for the last time I told you no, no, no operation. If you want to help me, give me some more of those drugs. That's all I need, you know I can't feel a pain after I take a pill. Oh Boy. (Mrs. Delanny grips the rail on her bed.) I'm hurting again!

Doctor: Mrs. Delanny, You are hurting now is because your pain are increasing so, that the medicine in your system can no longer fight against it. (Mrs Delanny put her hands over ears) All right, I will send a nurse.

(Doctor leaves Stage. Nurse enters from the hallway.)

Nurse: (very politely) Here you are, Mrs Delanny. Please drink the water nice and slow.

Delanny: Excuse me, nurse, but I was just wondering, how long have you been a nurse?

Nurse: Oh, over thirty years.

Mrs. Delanny: Oh, not thirty years!? Just how old are you?

Nurse: Do I look younger? I am only fifty-one.

Mrs. Delanny: (loudly) Fifty-one years old? Hell you looks just as old as I do. Why aren't you dying of cancer? Get out of my room. Get out of here, you old goat.

Nurse: (Angrily) Listen here, lady, I have been putting up with your insults for three weeks now, and I am tired of your disrespectful mouth. (nurse leaving as Delanny's friend enters)

Old friend: Mary, why were you yelling at her like that?

Mrs. Delanny: What's it to you!

Old friend: What's got you so tempered up today?.

Mrs. Delanny: As a matter of fact you do. What did you come here for... to pay your last respects? You think when I die I'm going to leave you something. Well, you "old coot," I hate to disappoint you, but I am not dying.

Old Friend: (feeling bad) Mary, what did I say wrong? I can't help it because I'm in such good health and you're not.

Mrs. Delanny: It ant what you said, it's just that you're my age and I am sick and you ant. Why are you in such good health. What do you do take steroids.

Old friend: Mary, I came by because I was concerned about you. I have never seen you so upset. Maybe it's just best that I leave.

(Lights fade down as old friend leaves. Lights fade in as doctor enters.)

Mrs. Delanny: What is it now, Doctor?

Doctor: Mrs. Delanny, I just finished looking over your ex-rays, and I'm afraid you have waited too long. There is nothing we can do now, I'm sorry. I called your daughter, she should be here shortly.

Mrs. Delanny: Wait a minute, young man. What do you mean I have waited too late, (pause) you mean I have worsened.

Doctor: Yes Ma'am, you have worsened to the point that we can't do anything for you. (pause) I have to finish my daily rounds now, but if you need anything just push the red button for the nurse.

(The Doctor leaves the room. Mrs. Delanny is alone on the stage.)

Mrs. Delanny: (begins to pray) Lord, can you hear me? Hey, I ant ready to go. I have a girl to raise. Just because she's forty years old, she still need her Mama. Father, please just give me a little longer to get my life right. I'll start going to church and I'll even stop gambling on Sunday. Father, please hear me, I don't want to go. I don't want to go.

(Lesia enters the room.)

Lesia: Mama, how ya feel, you look so bad.

Mrs. Delanny: O, I feel weak.

Lesia: (sadly) The doctor told me.

Mrs. Delanny: (smiles at Lesia) Don't cry, it will all be fine. I want you to know that I have always loved you. I know sometimes I was mean, but I hoped youforgive me. I am sorry. (depressed) I guess I won't get to gamble anymore so maybe now you can save some money. Baby, I am going to truly miss you. (thinking back) Hey, remember when we use to go to the movies together and throw popcorn at the screen.

Lesia: (laughs) yaaah, I remember.

Mrs. Delanny: (continuing to think back) Oh, I have a confession, remember the time your father gave you fifty dollars, and I told you that the money was counterfeit? Well, I lied. I took that money and went out and bought the biggest, finest bottle of wine I could buy.

Lesia: (sadly) Mama, I don't know what to say.

Mrs. Delanny: Sweetheart, don't say nothing, just hold me, hold your Mama. (Mrs. Delanny holds Lesia closely against her breast).

Lesia: Mama, I better go call my boss to let him know I won't be to work today.

Mrs. Delanny: No oh no, you go on to work, I'll be fine.

Lesia: Mamma, are you sure.

Mrs. Delanny: Yes, someone is going to have to pay this hospital bill when I'm out of here.

Lesia: (laughs) Mama, you have always managed to make me smile. I love you. (pause) Let me go, get you some rest, and I will see you later, ok?

(After Lesia leaves the stage, Mrs. Delanny falls asleep. The lights fade down then blue lights fade up. Two spirits are standing on the stage.)

Mrs. Delanny: Hey, Bobby, what are you doing here?

Ghost: I came for you, girl.

Mrs. Delanny: (in spirit form) Oh it's so good to see you again. You haven't changed one bit.

Ghost: You are still beautiful yourself.

Mrs. Delanny: You're only saying that because you are my husband.

Ghost: Yah, Yah, you better come on, everyone's waiting.

(two spirits leaves the stage)

Mrs. Delanny: Here I come, hey will I have to remarry you again once I get up there. I hope not, it was hard enough marrying you the first time.

(Curtain closes)

THE END

America 2000: Skills For The Workplace

Danita Weary

The year 2000 is fast approaching bringing with it improvements in the workplace and in our everyday lives. In order for these changes to take place, the workplace must become a more efficient and productive entity.

The possession of a high school diploma and, in some cases, a college degree is becoming a requirement for quite a few jobs today. In the next few years we will see the possession of a high school diploma become necessary for all. In the next ten to twelve years we will see the possession of a college degree become necessary for most jobs.

According to Steven Ammann, executive vice-president of People's Bank; Roger White, insurance agent; and Tina Womack, manager of the Community Law Office, a proficient knowledge of computers will be the number one skill needed for job-seekers in the coming years. The world is becoming more and more computerized everyday; so, in order to keep up with the world powers, businesses and companies, big and small, are turning to computers also. One reason for the computer's present popularity, according to Mr. Ammann, is its cheapness. The difference in the price of a computer five years ago and one today is astronomical. If price patterns continue, business owners five years from now will be able to buy computers for next to nothing pushing the use of computers to an even greater high.

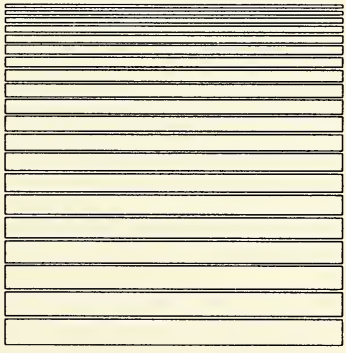
Another skill important to have both now and in the future according to Mr. Ammann and Mrs. Womack is the ability to get along with people. Because of the fierce competition in the business world, people with charismatic personalities will be needed to help draw customers to or make deals for their business. The behind-the-scenes people will be almost non-existent in the next few years. Only the "movers and shakers," those people who go out and make things happen, will be needed.

Creative and innovative people and people with a knowledge of technology will dominate the business place according to Mrs. Womack. These people will come up with the ideas and inventions that will take us into the future. People with exemplary marketing and communication skills will sell these ideas and inventions to the world.

Business leaders are looking for overachievers, people who

have been successful in their educational endeavors. They want people who think over and above the practical. People who are aware of the economic situation of the world will be invaluable because what affects the world will affect their business in some way eventually. A profitable business of the future will be aware of any and every thing that may affect it. It will also be equipped with personnel able to handle any misfortune that may happen.

In order for a person to survive in the workplace of the immediate future, he or she must have computer skills plus one or more of the skills or traits described above. The person will also have to know how to get things done. The use of unskilled labor is fast disappearing; the skilled worker will rule in the coming years.



Evils of Hawthorne's "Rappaccini's Daughter"

Leslie Carty

By examining the characters in Hawthorne's "Rappaccini's Daughter," we can see parallels with people today and how hidden evil exists outside the world of fiction. Nathaniel Hawthorne's characters in "Rappaccini's Daughter" are very much like the way people are today. Even though this story was written in the 1800's, the characters can easily be mistaken for people we come in contact with in our daily lives.

I will examine Dr. Giacomo Rappaccini, one of the prime characters because his evil actions affect Giovanni, Beatrice, and Baglioni. Hawthorne describes Dr. Rappaccini as a tall, emaciated sallow, and sickly-looking man, dressed in a scholar's garb of black. He is an older man with gray hair, a thin, gray beard, and a face marked with intellect and cultivation. The doctor, an outstanding scientist with a great quest for knowledge and power, possesses a scientific thirst that seems to be unnatural, even to the people who know him.

Dr. Rappaccini takes great pride and care in tending to his garden because he knows of its dangers. He uses precaution by wearing gloves when working in the garden, but his daughter Beatrice does not wear gloves and appears unthreatened by the garden. This was all part of the doctor's plan. Before the story opens, the doctor had created a magnificent plant that grew its purple flowers beside the marble fountain in his garden. This plant sprang from the soil at the very hour Beatrice drew her first breath of life. Beatrice grew up and blossomed with the plant and was nourished with its breath. Beatrice had been nourished with poison from this plant ever since she was born and because of this, she herself had become the deadliest poison in existence. Dr. Rappaccini's fatal science kept Beatrice bound to his garden, isolated from society. His doing this reveals his evil side, not unlike people we know.

Today, we can find fathers who are like Dr. Rappaccini. This relationship can be seen in fathers who are very protective and controlling over their daughters. These fathers today might not go to the extreme of literally poisoning their daughters to protect them, but they do show a somewhat evil side by trying to keep control and power over their daughters. They should, instead, let their daughters lead their

own lives.

Another character, Giovanni Guasconti, reminds me of people today. Giovanni appears very different from what he really is. Hawthorne creates this character in order to show his readers that a person can appear to be nice and friendly, then before you know it, an evil or wicked side can show. At the beginning of the story, Giovanni is a young student who has just arrived in this region of Italy to pursue his studies at the University of Padua. Giovanni is away from his homeland and is unsure of his whereabouts. Everything changes for Giovanni when he meets Beatrice. He becomes very attracted to this beautiful daughter of Dr. Rappaccini. Giovanni could not stand being away from her, but not because he truly loved Beatrice:

> It was not love, although her rich beauty was a madness to him; nor horror, even while he fancied her spirit to be imbued with the same baneful essence that seemed to pervade her physical frame; but a wild offspring of both live and horror that had each parent in it, and burned like one and shivered like the other. Giovanni knew not what to dread; still less did he know what to hope; yet hope and dread kept a continual warfare in his breast, alternately vanquishing one another and starting up afresh to renew the contest. (Hawthorne 794)

I think that he might have been just a little infatuated with her. Maybe he was being drawn to Beatrice by the sweet poison within her.

Baglioni warns Giovanni about Beatrice, but he does not pay attention to him. It was almost as if Giovanni were asking to be poisoned. The evil side of Giovanni appears when he continues to see Beatrice after he has been warned about her. Giovanni knows that it is wrong for him to see Beatrice, but that does not stop him. Believe it or not, there are people just like Giovanni today. We can find people in our everyday lives who take chances they know are risky. We can see this in people who take illegal drugs or who participate in other forms of chance taking. The people who participate in these activities know that it is wrong and it will eventually destroy their lives, but this does not stop millions of people. I think the people who do these things have some kind of hidden evil, like Giovanni, because something is possessing them from within.

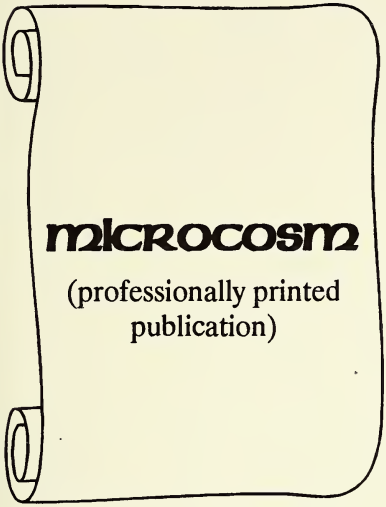
I consider Hawthorne's character Beatrice to be the victim in this story. Beatrice is aware of what her father, Dr. rappaccini, has done

to her. We can see this by Beatrice saying to Giovanni, "It is my father's fatal science! It was not I! I dreamed only to love thee and be with thee a little time, and so to let thee pass away, leaving but thine image in mine heart; for, Giovanni, believe it, though my body be nourished with poison, my spirit is God's creature, and craves love as its daily food. But my father,--he has united us in this fearful sympathy" (Hawthorne 804).

In the story, Hawthorne describes Beatrice as being a young girl who looks full of life, health, and energy. It is made very clear in the story that Beatrice is beautiful. She appears to have everything, but actually she has nothing. I think Beatrice loves Giovanni and she does not purposely poison him. Beatrice does possess a hidden evil because she has poison within her, something she has no control over. Like the victims of child abuse today, Beatrice does not choose to be this way: her father made the choice for her. It is not a hard task to find people today who are victims just as Beatrice is.

Pietro Baglioni is evil from the start. The only good gesture I found that he did was to try and warn Giovanni about Beatrice. Baglioni, who is a professor of medicine, had had a professional relationship with Dr. Rappaccini, but that is all. There was a professional warfare of long continuance between him and Dr. Rappaccini. Baglioni was very envious of the doctor and that is the reason he wanted to ruin his experiment. The selfish Baglioni gives Giovanni an antidote supposedly to help cure Beatrice, but this said-to-be cure is poison. I think that Baglioni is ruthless and most definitely evil. His actions speak for themselves, just look at what he does to Beatrice. I wish that I could say that people like Baglioni do not exist today, but it is not possible. The hidden evil possessed by Baglioni appears in people today more than any other evil. You do not have to strain your neck in order to find these people; they are all around you. There is always someone out there who will go to the extreme to prove to be superior. It does not matter to these people who they have to step on or what they have to do to get to the top.

"Rappaccini's Daughter" is still a soul-searching story for today's times. The characters and setting can be found in varying degrees in life now no matter how small or large a place we live in. The wicked and evil are still with us even if it is not confined to Dr. Rappaccini's garden.



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